RASHTRIYA
SWAYAMSEWAK
SANGH

To

Om Prakashji

who was so keen about

a comprehensive book on the RSS

but when it is completed

we have only his memory

RASHTRIYA SWAYAMSEWAK SANGH

D. R. GOYAL



RADHA KRISHNA

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Chapter I

Veil of Demagogy

Force should be right or rather, right or wrong
(Between those endless jars justice resides)
Should lose their names and so should justice too
Then everything includes itself in power,
Power into will will into appetite
And appetite, an universal wolf,
So doubly seconded with will and power,
Must make perforce an universal prey,
And last, eat up himself

It was the last week of February The Chief Executive Councillor of Delhi, Kedar Nath Sahni, was signing a number of letters in Hindi—personal invitations to the citizens of the capital to attend the annual function of the Delhi branch of the RSS and improve their understanding about the Sangh Sahni is a swaymsewak of long standing and has never wavered in his belief that those who criticise the Sangh are either motivated by malice or deficient in understanding

It was beyond Sahni's imagination that any one of the invitees may think of not availing the opportunity But there were some such Chaudhary Brahm Perkash*, for example, wrote back "You have invited me to attend the annual day function of the Delhi RSS (in which the Sar Sangh chalak Balasaheb Deoras is participating) in an attempt to improve my knowledge of the RSS and to clear misunderstandings Do you think a demonstration of discipline, parade and physical exercises combined with platitudinous preachings is enough

*A former Chief Minister of Delhi State he became Minister of Food and Agriculture after the fall of Morarji government.

to convince a person that RSS is an innocent organisation? I have a better view of human perception and understanding The RSS presentation on such functions may be attractive for children and for those adults who have not known RSS People like me who know cannot be taken in by such sham courtesy and discipline

"I will concede right now", he added, "that RSS people are well disciplined They are also trained in show of courtesy Equally well trained are they in carrying on whisper campaigns for character assassination The hands that rise for a polite *namaste* are equally well trained in planting the dagger in the side of those they disapprove I have heard the RSS people frequently repeating the story of Shivaji killing Afzal Khan while courteously embracing the latter It seems the RSS people have made this image of Shivaji as their model for political conduct rather than any other aspect of that valiant fighter's character"

This exchange of letters brings to mind another correspondence—between Golwalkar and Jawaharlal Nehru, in 1948 The RSS then was under ban and the then RSS chief was making frantic efforts to personally meet the Prime Minister to convince him of the innocence of his organisation Jawaharlal Nehru in a letter, personally signed, informed him with his characteristic politeness that it was no use and pointed out "In the course of the last year both the central government and the provincial governments have received a mass of information in regard to the objectives and activities of the RSS This information does not fit in with what has been stated by you in this behalf Indeed it would appear that the declared objectives have little to do with the real ones and with the activities carried on in various forms and ways by people associated with the RSS These real objectives appear to be completely opposed to the decision of the Indian Parliament and the provisions of the proposed Constitution of India The activities, according to our information, are anti national and often subversive and violent You would appreciate, therefore, that mere assertions to the contrary do not help very much"

The problem of understanding (or misunderstanding) about the RSS is not new, nor of recent origin As far back as 1934, when it was in its infancy, the AICC had passed a resolution

forbidding Congressmen from becoming members of the Hindu Mahasabha, the Muslim League and the RSS Jamnalal Bajaj had written to Hedgewar seeking clarification on many points of its ideology and practice The reply he got was that it would be better if they met in person Bajaj did meet Hedgewar in Nagpur but nothing seems to have come out of it The resolution remained in operation

Later in the same year Gandhi was invited to see an RSS camp in Wardha Next day after the visit Hedgewar met him personally The RSS people like to believe that all this was done at the request of Gandhi But who took the initiative is not so material as the fact that both the visit and the talk failed to produce any result The RSS publications claim that Gandhi praised the organisation but of that there is no evidence except the word of the RSS people themselves Circumstantial evidence points to the contrary Gandhi was known to proclaim his opinion without any inhibition and if his doubts about the RSS had been set at rest he would have said so publicly He also did not recommend to the Congress that restrictions on its members joining the RSS be withdrawn The only opinion explicitly expressed is the one reported by Pyarelal "A member of Gandhiji's party interjected that the RSS people had done a fine job of work at Wah refugee camp They had shown discipline, courage and capacity for hard work 'But don t forget', answered Gandhiji, 'even so had Hitler's Nazis and the Fascists under Mussolini' He characterised the RSS as a 'communal body with a totalitarian outlook' "*

The RSS people may say, perhaps with some justification that it is Pyarelal s report against their own, and, therefore, cannot be taken as a conclusive proof of Gandhi's opinion Even if the plea be conceded and the RSS be given the benefit of doubt on this score, it does not prove that their own contention about Gandhis's views on the RSS is correct or justified That the RSS has been hostile to Gandhi is so widely known and believed that no amount of assertion to the contrary can carry conviction, and of that there is sufficient proof in their own writings and speeches Even Sardar Patel, whom they considered an ally and who did have a soft corner for them

*Pyarelal *Mahatma Gandhi—the Last Phase*, p 440

had finally come to the conclusion that the poison which killed Gandhi had been generated by the RSS

The credibility of the RSS is further reduced by the habit of its publicists to flaunt stray favourable remarks of publicmen as commendation of the RSS even though they be known to hold widely divergent opinions from it on basic national issues like the interpretation of history, concept of nationalism, relationship of ends and means It has been the experience of several eminent figures that the RSS praised them to the skies as long as they served its purpose but the moment they differed the RSS resorted to vilification of the worst kind Charan Singh had had such experiences ever since he had embarked on the course of politics which forced on him alliance with Jana Sangh They would be soft like wax before the compact was made but hard like stone immediately thereafter

Jaya Prakash Narayan has been the worst victim of these tactics He praised them for hard work and efficiency in 1966 but by early 1968 he came to the conclusion that it was a com munal organisation of fascist variety In his presidential address at the Second National Conference against Communalism held in New Delhi he declared "The secular protestations of the Jana Sangh will never be taken seriously unless it cuts the bonds that tie it firmly to the RSS machine Nor can the RSS be treated as a cultural organisation as long as it remains the mentor and effective manipulator of a political party"*

During the Bihar Movement, partly because of the earnest pleadings of Nanaji and partly because of the dire need of a cadre organisation, JP laid aside his old objections as also the apprehensions of some of his close friends and extended his patronge to the RSS He was reassured that the Sangh was undergoing a process of fierce rethinking and he should help it to change and become useful for the nation Thus securing hold of the heart strings of the Messiah of Total Revolution the RSS extended its octopus grip over the movement and, in the bargain, emerged as the most influential faction in the new political grouping i e , the Janata Party Having gained a foothold in the heart of the power structure they turned round to tell JP off 'Hands off RSS' declared Madhorao Mulev The old man

*See *Secular Democracy* Annual Number, 1969, for full text

must have felt deeply cut up by the change if it had been fully reported to him However he continued to make efforts, rather pathetic they looked, to convince the Sangh to change He tried to win them over by love, he did not withdraw his patronage and affection and continued to associate himself with the functions of the Sangh but with due reservations, Addressing an RSS rally in Patna he repeated his entready "I have said it before and I say it again today that it appears to me that *there is need for basic change in the role of the Sangh and may be there is even need for a modification in its basic aims and objectives* Though it is not a reality even then *people identify it with Hindu communal and caste interests* But I know that a lot of discussion is going on between your organisers and the cadres about associating the followers of other religions, especially of those religions which are not born in India, such as Islam and Christianity, but are Indians in the same way as Hindus are "*

It seems the affectionate entreaties and sincere advice of JP produced no effect on Deoras and his men They went ahead with their plans causing anxiety and alarm all around A letter which JP wrote to Prime Minister Morarji on March 2, 1979 contained the following lines ' Some friends have repeatedly complained that RSS is trying to capture leadership in the government The RSS, like other political parties, is free to influence politics and is doing that too My only objection is that the RSS people are trying to influence politics with the camouflage of being a cultural organisation I have advised the leaders of the RSS to merge with other like minded organisations or the Sangh should get affiliated to Janata Party They, however, refuse to accept my views in the belief that they have a separate cultural identity and they have nothing to do with politics I totally disagree with this argument of the RSS leaders Even now I feel that the RSS should merge into organisations supporting Janata Party But if they are determined to retaining their separate identity I would again say that they should open their doors to non Hindus like Muslims and Christians I have always condemned the Hindu Rashtravad of RSS because it is a dangerous ideology and is contradictory to our ideal of composite Indian nation In a democracy every

*Speech made in April 1977 but published in *Organiser*, April 8, 1979

organisation has a right to propagate its philosophy and ideology That is the essence of democracy. And yet when it intends to establish its hold on politics we have to be watchful that its philosophy or ideology does not undermine the basic philosophy of Indian nationalism

"I have no objection to the RSS being affiliated to the Janata Party but it will have to change its Hindu face and become fully secular If it does not do that it should withdraw from politics and sever all connections with every constituent of Janata Party

"Nevertheless as Prime Minister of India it is your duty to make an effort to reform RSS or to make it a secular force All the thinking persons should combat its efforts to disrupt the secular basis of Indian nation and state "*

JP was persuaded to remove this portion from the epistle by his friends and advisers on the understanding that another letter on the subject could be sent later Who did the persuading and why, is not known It is no use guessing either because the fact of JP thinking along these lines has already become public knowledge The RSS must have been a part of his total frustration in the last days of his life

All the old apprehensions about the RSS had come alive after watching its antics and operations in government and the party After the downfall of Indira Gandhi, while the rest of the Janata Party people were trying to address themselves to the problems facing the nation, the RSS chief went round the country to reap the rich harvest of people's affection for those who had liberated them from the deadly stranglehold of the emergency caucus Impressive public receptions were held for him in all the important towns of the country and Deoras made clever use of these occasions to project a bright image of the RSS** what with railing against the opponents of the Sangh, demagogic presentation of its communal ideology as if it were genuine nationalism, an effective camouflage being provided by the Jamaat-e Islami leaders and cringing opportunism of some Muslims for whom the plums of office had come like unexpec-

*Weekly *Dinaman* (Hindi) April 8-14 1979

**At the reception in Delhi s Ramlila Grounds Deoras said "JP and RSS s ood solidly in the struggle of Democracy versus Dictatorship "

ted berries on a windy day It was downright cheekiness but was tolerated in the euphoric flush after the 1977 historic victory

Soon enough however the other partners in the struggle were constrained to spill the beans and expose the tall claims Madhu Limaye's was a typical reaction Writing in the *Secular Democracy* he not only contested Deoras's claim but also exposed that the Sangh was going out of its way to propitiate and please Indira Gandhi and her son He wrote "The RSS people claim that they spearheaded the anti emergency *struggle Nothing can be farther from the truth* The ban on the RSS frightened them The morale of their detenus collapsed within a few days after the declaration of the emergency A vast majority of these detenus abjectly apologised to the authorities Many deserted the RSS and the Jana Sangh in order to escape arrest This was their concept of 'character building' In flaming contrast was the behaviour of those who participated in the struggles under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi"

According to him the RSS, in fact, had not only surrendered but capitulated 'What is most surprising is that the RSS chief went so far as to congratulate Mrs Gandhi on her success in the election appeal before the Supreme Court As everybody knows this victory was obtained by changing the law and the Constitution in her favour During the emergency the RSS men sent repeated peace feelers to Mrs Gandhi They requested JP again and again to withdraw the movement"

He has also revealed how they had hailed the emergence of Sanjay Gandhi "When Shri Sanjay Gandi published his interview *against the public sector* and in favour of free market capitalism they started hailing him as a great leader In the emergency period, unlike *Sadhana*, *Opinion*, *Bhoomiputra* and other journals, the RSS newspapers and periodicals surrendered before the government and began to sing praises for Mrs Gandhi During the emergency days the RSS had often declared *that they had nothing* to do with the JP movement They even criticised in their affidavits JP s apeal to the police and armed forces to disregard illegal government orders They did everything in their power to curry favour with the

government."*

The fears were confirmed not only by the display of braggadacio but by the way the RSS men were trying to secure a grip over key positions in the power structure With the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in hand L K Advani achieved results for the Sangh which Indira Gandhi had failed to achieve with all the elaborate paraphernalia of coercion and censorship So subtly did he acculturise the media that the 'publicity shy' RSS men suddenly became newsworthy for reporters and the press barons awoke to the till then unknown talents of Sangh men In some of the reputed 'national dailies' these men replaced the old experienced journalists, many an editor, devoted to professionalism, found himself at wits' end against the invasion of new commitment The AIR, TV and PIB went through exercises to ensure the exclusion of RSS critics from the various programmes and encouragement to those capable of seeing virtue in the outfit Rules for extending facilities to journalists were carefully modified to make freedom of press and opinion 'genuine'

With Vajpayee presiding over the Ministry of External Affairs polite suggestions for taking the Sangh men on foreign trips began to be made and xenophobic swayamsewaks developed a new taste for things beyond Indian shores The Friends of India Society International held a huge conference in New Delhi under the presidentship of Hans Raj Gupta, the venerable Sangh chalak for North India, and received the benign blessings of Balasaheb Deoras It was taken as a signal by Indian missions all over the world to take note of the winds of change in New Delhi and adjust to the men of 'genuine non-alignment' A journalist from the headquarters of the RSS who had been associated with the RSS expansion outside the country was brought to hold a key position in one of the important institutions controlled by the External Affairs Ministry

An attempt was made to plant an approved 'expert' in the Ministry of Industrial Development which had been allotted to Brijlal Verma, Nanaji's favourite from Madhya Pradesh But it misfired However in the various Janata ruled states, the Sangh men were placed in charge of the most lucrative

*Limaye, Madhu, *Secular Democracy*, March (II) 1979

portfolios There had been so much noise against corruption in the preceding few years that ordinary men with ordinary appetites would have gone unnoticed but the Sangh men made their mark and won reputation for skilful and large scale use of office to corner money—of course, for promoting the best interests of the nation through the most patriotic agency of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh Whether you had to set up an industry, secure some licence, get job or try for a transfer you had to go through a most efficiently organised agency of public recommendation Teachers in schools doctors in dispensaries, policemen in police stations—all began to devise ways of propitiating the new gods

The Vidyarathi Parishad was let loose in temples of learning—colleges, universities and institutes of research Teachers and scholars suspected of being anti RSS were sought to be pushed out by the worst kind of hoodlum tactics, and the efforts did meet with success in several cases The soft spoken scion of the Bengali bhadralok, P C Chunder, found it politic to enthusiastically respond to the suggestions from these self-styled guardians of Indian culture

The first assault, as was natural, was against the institutions dealing with history On the basis of a mere anonymous letter some text books, hailed earlier all over the country as model aids to instruction in history, were withdrawn, Indian Council of Historical Research was drastically reorganised and a rival to Indian History Congress was promoted in collaboration with the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Research Foundation A whole crop of societies and institutions mushroomed all over the country to make use of the fabulous funds meant for adult education to promote the 'national cause'.

All this should have been enough to put the most lackadaisical feudal politicians on guard Those who stood up to call a halt do not deserve much credit in fact they had compromised their principles and personalities for too long and deserved the twitting—*'Didn't you know?', 'Were you babes'—they get from* the Sangh men

The RSS journals and newspapers had made their own contribution by arrogant abuse of whoever dared cross the path of the Sangh—whether it was Charan Singh, George

Fernandes, H N Bahuguna, Madhu Limaye, Krishan Kant or E M S Namboodiripad

On top of all was the chief Deoras who was scattering gems of his 'cultural wisdom' all over the country Late in 1978 he displayed the muscle in the field of education by inaugurating an all india conference of RSS run schools where thousands of young students and teachers were brought together to launch the apex organisation, Shiksha Bharati * Early next year, coinciding with the Republic Day in 1979, the RSS organised a World Hindu Conference at Prayag where Deoras gave notice that conversions to non Hindu religions would not be tolerated any more ** He exhorted the Government of India to look after the interests of the Hindus abroad—not Indians, mind you' It left everybody wondering whether it did not constitute an invidious distinction between Indian citizens on the basis of religion and whether it would not create difficulties for Hindus living in other countries From there he went to the sensitive eastern region and made speeches which were followed by unrest among tribals, particularly those belonging to the Christian faith In Gauhati he made the astounding statement that the Hindus coming over from Bangladesh should be treated by the government as refugees while the Muslims should be thrown out as infiltrators It was a call for a communal twist to the government policy on the unfortunate immigrants according to which all people coming to India in the wake of 1971 developments were to be sent back but only after ascertaining from Dacca which of them were genuine Bangladeshis

And yet the RSS would have us believe that it is a purely cultural organisation having no interest in politics, that its outlook is not communal but national, that it has generated more honesty and patriotism than anybody else It is not they who need to change, we are told, but their critics who should improve their minds and reform their outlook Nay, they would suspect that those who criticise them are inspired by motives not altogether honourable Speaking at the function to which Sahni was inviting people with such earnestness, Deoras, the Sar Sangh chalak, said "As some changes are taking place in

*Reported in the *Organiser* November 12 1978
**Reported in the *Organiser*, February 4, 1979

the political situation these days, political pressure is being mounted on us to change the original base of the Sangh But it does not behove us to disown our basis, whatever the pressure Therefore, our mission of Hindu Sangathan or unity should be understood clearly."

Are we to believe that the demand for change in outlook is being made on them only now in the year of grace 1979? Did everybody from Gandhi downwards understand, appreciate and approve their 'mission of Hindu Sangathan'? If that is not the case as it is not, to talk of political pressure is not entirely honest It only means that all those who have been fondly hoping that they would learn from life and change are in for disappointment

There could be hope if an attempt had been made to rationally examine and explain the concept which we are required to understand But Deoras starts by asserting "For thousands of years in all the states and the languages of this country, terms like Hindu, Hindu society, Hindu dharma Hindu culture, Hindu tradition and Hindu civilisation have been widely used This shows that Hindus and Hindu society are very much there" But who ever disputed it? Nor has it ever been controverted that there have been 'a number of great men who have worked for social reform' and for the removal of social evils like untouchability, caste system, dowry and child marriage from the Hindu society He tries to prove his argument, if there is any, by pointing out that the reformers did not try similar reform in the Muslim society

The RSS is not called communal because it has done anything to remove the social evils or undesirable 'customs and practices' which weaken the social fabric and render people incapable of contributing to social good Rather the complaint against it is that it seeks to win support of the Hindus by only mentioning some names like Vivekananda, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahatma Phule and Dr Ambedkar and in practice repudiates them all The RSS is not known to have ever studied society, nor has it ever conducted any campaign for social reform And how does he put reform and consolidation at par? Vivekananda had said "I see around me men quarrelling in the name of religion Hindus, Muslims, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishnavaites, Saivites, all are engaged in these fights They

never pause to think that Lord Krishna is the same as Siva, that Brahman, Jesus and Allah are the same, that the same Rama has a thousand names" He had declared that "all religions are branches of the same tree" * Such ideas occur frequently in the social and philosophical discourses of all great men What do the RSS people do? After repeating the mantra 'एकम सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति' they turn round to repudiate its very spirit by saying that change of religion subverts the loyalty to nation The Hindu tradition has never expected, or forced, conformity even in the name of god, what to speak of citizenship as does the RSS

It should be kept in mind that the charge of communalism is not against Hindu society as Deoras tries to show with his sophistry The charge is against the RSS and its ideology which run against the very spirit of Hinduism in excluding the followers of religions born outside India from the concept of nation and rights of citizenship That is what Gandhi objected to, and more recently Jaya Prakash The attempt at false identification, at creating an illusion that the RSS and the Hindu society are synonymous, in fact makes the sincerity of the Sangh suspect

The RSS has been trying to create several other illusions The foregoing paragraphs have indicated some of them and also that most of the claims are far from well founded It is, however, necessary that the RSS mind be studied in depth and in some detail So many people, young and old, become its members Not all of them know the philosophical and ideological basis of the organisation They are lured by several illusions For the RSS establishment ignorance alone is bliss, it thrives as long as they are able to cover their real intentions with a veil of words If their followers, the rank and-file swayamsewaks, come to know the reality, either the RSS will have to change or the followers would give it up The present attempt to analyse its ideology and practice is motivated to understand and communicate understanding and thus tear the treacherous veil of demagogy

*Quoted by Damodaran K *Indian Thought* p 35

Chapter 2

The Soil and the Seed

I

Historical Background

The foundation of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) marked a leap out of the mainstream of the national struggle for independence It was a big leap though not forward It was a turning back, a somewhat romantic sit down to hark back to the memories of days gone by and brave deeds performed by characters covered by legendary lustre The founder, Dr K B Hedgewar was not a very prominent participant in the various social reform and political movements of the time although his followers tell us about his associations with extremists in Nagpur and Poona, the revolutionaries of the Anushilan group in Calcutta, the Tilakites in Maharashtra etc, contemporary accounts extant are silent about him Even the officially issued literature mentions no documents and details which could show that he was as colourful and distinguished a personality as he is made out to be

The turning away is generally attributed to the supposedly big change in the country's political climate with the demise of Lokamanya Tilak and the ascendence of Gandhi While the former, according to this point of view, was not inhibited by the fad of non violence and Hindu Muslim unity, the latter had subordinated the cause of freedom to these principles The argument does not quite square up with facts, too widely known to be rejected by the advocates themselves The personalities of Tilak and Gandhi were, of course, vastly different While the former approached religion to seek support and

sustenance for his patriotic political impulse, the latter sought spiritual fulfilment in the struggle for freedom While the Lokamanya was a populist leader prepared to take up a cause or activity only if it held the promise of advancing the date of achieving his 'birth right'* the Mahatma was essentially a spiritualist who would not have anything to do with a political action if it did not correspond to his spiritual moral sense. Despite this diversity of character the two had found common ground for action and the depth of belief and understanding made them comrades in arms On the goals there was no difference and on the methods there was understanding despite absence of unanimity

On the Hindu Muslim question—which seems to be the main point of departure for Hedgewar—Tilak cannot be accused of advocating Hindu Rashtra which could be undermined by Gandhian leadership And on the issue of Khilafat he had promised to support whatever decision the Muslims arrived at He of course used the Ganesh Chaturthi and Shiv Jayanti festivals to mobilise the Hindu sentiment for the cause of freedom even though the expediency did not help in fostering unity and understanding at mass level But Gandhi in this respect was no way behind, a fact which is today admitted by the Sangh people themselves In the introduction to Golwalkar's book *Bunch of Thoughts* M A. Venkata Rao writes

"Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi introduced a powerful leaven into this maelstrom of ideas, impulses and images having many elements congenial to the spirit of Indian Culture His fasts and vows, his silences, his prayer meetings, his satyagraha—all appeared to have a family resemblance to the *tapasya* of old The Hindu spirit dormant in the educated classes (and ordinarily submerged beneath their secular education of the Anglo-Indian colleges) rose to the surface and hailed the political leader as spiritual Mahatma of the authentic type of spiritual past Thus the national liberation movement of M K Gandhi derived power from the cultural heritage indwelling in the subconscious mind of the people "**

* 'Freedom is my birth right' was Tilak s slogan

** Introduction to Golwalkar M S, *Bunch of Thoughts*, p xxii

Rao bemoans that the political motif was predominant in Gandhi That may be partly true but this was even more true of Tilak And yet if the RSS leadership insist on explaining the birth of the organisation in terms of the change in political culture from Tilak to Gandhi* one has to look for the motivation in something other than ideology

Hedgewar is known to have been a follower and even a beneficiary of Dr B S Moonje who was one of those Maharashtrian leaders who resented the rise of Gandhi more than anything else, that it meant passing of the national leadership into the hands of a non Maharashtrian non Brahmin Such people were carrying on a whisper campaign Gandhi had replied to the critics of this variety in an article, "Confession of Faith," in *Young India* setting out in unambiguous terms his relations with the departed leader

"A strange anonymous letter has been received by me, admiring me for having taken up a cause that was dearest to

*" The founder of the RSS late Dr K B Hedgewar was amongst those few revolutionaries who worked for the emancipation of India from the then British Rule In his youth and as a student in Calcutta, he came in close contact with revolutionary movement and himself was actively associated with their activities Thereafter he was an active, constructive worker of the Indian National Congress However after actually remaining in contact with the revolutionaries as well as after having participated in the Congress Movement in the year 1921, he came to the conclusion that in the disintegrated condition of the country, an organisation of the Hindus based on the feelings of brotherhood and oneness without any distinction as to sect, faith, caste, colour or creed, imbued with the patriotism, with a realisation of the greatness of their past can alone win independence for the nation In the twenties the political situation was fast changing and there was confusion writ large on the political scene The concept that nation with a glorious past which indeed was a 'Hindu Rashtra' was being wiped out from the people and its interests were being ignored by the then political leaders particularly after the eclipse of Lokamanya Tilak from the political horizon after his death in 1920 The Founder of the RSS, Dr Hedgewar, then visualised the idea of founding the RSS as a movement with a view to fearlessly propagate that India was a 'Hindu Rashtra (Nation) as contra distinguished from 'Hindu Raj "
—*Affidavit filed in the Nagpur Court by M D Deoras and Rajendra Singh*, Para 8

Lokamanya's heart, and telling me that his spirit was residing in me and that I must prove a worthy follower of his The letter, moreover, admonishes me not to lose heart in the prosecution of the swaraj programme, and finishes off by accusing me of imposture in claiming to be politically a disciple of Gokhale I wish the correspondents will throw off the slavish habit of writing anonymously We who are developing the swaraj spirit, must cultivate the courage of fearlessly speaking out our mind The subject matter of the letter, however, being of public importance, demands a reply I cannot claim the honour of being a follower of the late Lokamanya I admire him like the millions of his countrymen for his indomitable will, his vast learning, his love of country, and above all the purity of his private life and great sacrifice Of all the men of modern times, he captivated most the imagination of his people He breathed into us the spirit of swaraj No one perhaps realized the evil of the existing system of Government as Mr Tilak did And in all humility I claim to deliver his message to the country as truly as the best of his disciples But I am conscious that my method is not Mr Tilak's method And that his why I have still difficulty with some of the Maharashtra leaders But I sincerely think that Mr Tilak did not disbelieve my method I enjoyed the privilege of his confidence And his last word to me in the presence of several friends was, just a fortnight before his death, that mine was an excellent method if the people could be persuaded to take to it But he said he had doubts I know no other method, I can only hope that when the final test comes, the country will be proved to have assimilated the method of non violent non cooperation Nor am I unaware of my limitations I can lay no claim to scholarship I have not his powers of organization, I have no compact disciplined party to lead, and having been an exile for twenty three years, I cannot claim the experience that the Lokamanya had of India Two things we had in common to the fullest measure—love of the country and the steady pursuit of swaraj I can, therefore, assure the anonymous writer that, yielding to none in my reverence for the memory of the deceased, I will march side by side with the foremost of the Lokamanya's disciples in the pursuit of swaraj' *

* *Young India* July 13 1921 (Quoted by D G, Tendulkar in *Mahatma*, Vol 2 pp 47 48)

Admirers and followers of the founder of the RSS would certainly feel unhappy about this conjecture which implies that Hedgewar was imbued with a strong sentiment of Maharashtrian chauvinism We shall return to this question in a subsequent chapter but would crave the indulgence of the readers not to dismiss it out of hand unless weightier evidence for the rejection be available In our view there are more facts favouring this hypothesis than against it

The officially published accounts of the life of Hedgewar provide us no details of the experiences or the books he read which influenced his thinking and brought him to visualising "the idea of founding the RSS as a movement with a view to fearlessly propagate that India was a Hindu Rashtra (Nation) as contra distinguished from Hindu Raj' The idea was certainly not in the atmosphere The only person who was advocating it was V D Savarkar whose book, *Hindutva*, expounding the theory of Hindu Rashtra had been smuggled out of the Andaman prison in 1917 There is no evidence that it had reached Hedgewar or that he had heard about it from somebody Hedgewar had visited Savarkar in Ratnagiri jail in 1924 but the RSS people would not admit that he had any long discussion with him about the ideology and organisation which he was to promote If that were done the students of history would be spared a lot of guessing exercise Admission of such a powerful influence involves the risk of diminishing the halo of originality, the creator image, which perhaps is very important for a cult like RSS to have self confidence and to spread It would also raise the inconvenient question why Hedgewar did not follow Savarkar in the Hindu Mahasabha whose politics and ideology the latter had shaped in the image of Hindu Rashtra

The discussion of the RSS Hindu Mahasabha relations may be a fruitless distraction at this stage when we are trying to discover the sources of Hedgewar's inspiration and identifying the motive behind founding of the RSS as an organisation away from the din and bustle of the patriotic struggle for freedom The subject will be taken up subsequently in a more appropriate context Here it may be better to have a look at the developments in the country during the period when the mind of Hedgewar was being shaped The exercise becomes relevant

This was the temper and mood of resurgent young India, pressing forward to bring the common man into the picture not merely as a serf loyally serving the lord and master but as a partner and co sharer in the struggle for, as well as the fruits of, independence It is not fortuitous that Maxim Gorky hailed Savarkar's work The democratic spirit was breathing a new life into political India through his words These were revolutionary thoughts indicating that India's struggle may no longer remain confined to petitions, prayers and protests, that the ennui and lethargy following the defeat of 1857 was breaking and the essentially middle class character of the nationalist movement might undergo a change What frightened the British rulers was not so much the use of bomb and pistol but the emergence of such new ideas

These ideas had roots in objective reality Broad masses of people were coming into political action Workers were getting organised in factories and peasants were standing up in farms to resist the tyranny and oppression of the foreign rule Boycott of British goods and picketing of the shops selling foreign cloth saw people of all classes coming together There were massive processions, demonstrations and strike actions And this accelerated the process of welding togther people of various regions, religions and castes These developments drew the comment from Lajpat Rai that "national consciousness had awakened" and that "up to now India was taken to be a mere geographical entity. It had now begun to have a unified existence and place among nations "*

B G Tilak himself pointed out during that period that the new upsurge had resulted in the emergence of India as a nation becoming an accomplished fact and that the Indians were confronting the British as an oppressed nation and demanding political rights **

The following extract from an article of Tilak clearly shows the conception of swaraj which he had in mind

"The British are not satisfied with keeping only the ruling power in their hands, but they want also to seize possession of

*Speach at Swadeshi Conference, *Times of India* January 4, 1908

**Quoted by Reisner, I M, from a report from the Russian consulate in Bombay (Tsarist Russian Foreign Policy Archives)

the trade and industries of this country forcibly and unjustly to ruin them Well, even after doing so much they should at least have kept the burden of taxation on the people light, but the very reverse of it is seen to be the case In short, Swarajya albeit of the old type, is gone, trade has been ruined, industries have collapsed, glory has come to an end, wealth has departed, ability has disappeared and courage has failed There is no education according to the new system, no rights, no respect for public opinion, no prosperity, no contentment, but only there is the very violent pressure of the three 'd's', of *daridrya* (poverty), *dushkal* (famine) and *dravyashoshan* (sucking up of wealth) constantly troubling us The moment an attempt is sought to be made according to one's strength to raise up the head of the nation out of this the head is sure to be bruised by the stone-roller of the system of British rule ! (by the) pressure of tyranny and high handedness *

The line of thought here does not point to Hedgewar's Hindu Rashtra-vad but to Jawaharlal Nehru who imparted a large dose of secular ideas and sought to provide socio economic content to the sentiment of nationalism Such ideas were gaining currency in the Congress and the country Nehru has rightly pointed out that "the real symbol of the new age was Bal Gangadhar Tilak" and that "there was no doubt that the vast majority of politically-minded people in India favoured Tilak and his group" **

A big event of the period was the partition of Bengal enforced by Viceroy Curzon in the teeth of bitter opposition It has added significance for the present discussion because at the time when anti partition agitation was raging in Bengal Hedgewar was in Calcutta as a medical student and is said to have been close to the agitators The idea behind the partition scheme was to create rival centres to Calcutta for political activity which could then be played against one another by the imperial authority "The Government", writes Grover, "believed that the Territorial Redistribution Scheme would in course of time create new centres of activity among the Mohammedans

* *Mahratta* June 9 1908

** Nehru Jawaharlal *Discovery of India* p 295

at Dacca, among the natives of Bihar at Patna, among the Oriyas at Cuttack and thus leave it 'no longer possible for a small knot of persons at Calcutta to manipulate or manufacture public opinion throughout the whole of Bengal and for universal consumption'*

Curzon was using another weapon also, that is, to drive a wedge between the Hindus and Muslims He tried to sell the partition scheme as a favour to the Muslims Thus speaking at Dacca he told his predominantly Muslim audience that the partition would "invest the Mohammedans in Eastern Bengal with a unity which they have not enjoyed since the days of old Mussulman viceroys and kings" **

Surendra Nath Banerjea understood the mischief and observed that the partition plan was fatal "to the close union between Hindus and Muslims upon which the prospects of India's advancement so largely depended" ***

To begin with there was all round opposition to the scheme both by the Hindus and Muslims During his 1904 tour of the East Bengal districts Curzon could see the solidarity of the Bengalis in the placards displayed in the streets of Dacca which read 'Pray do not sever Bengalis', 'Do not divide us', 'Do not flout history and nationality' The *Moslem Chronicle* of Calcutta wrote editorially "We do not recollect that there has been, in the discussion of public questions, ever before so much unanimity of voice as that which is raising its shouts of protest *against the partition of Bengal* "****

Gradually however the British were able to wean the Muslims away from the anti partition agitation and the opposition became predominantly Hindu The policy of divide and rule had succeeded leaving behind a bitter trail of communal ill will This was the British response to the growing radicalisation of the national movement The policy of 'kisses and kicks' as it unfolded during Minto's viceroyalty was to suppress the radical elements, drive a wedge between the Hindus and the Muslims and divide the Congress When the split took place at

* Grover B L., *British Policy towards Indian Nationalism 1885 1909*, p 66

** Curzon s Address at Dacca, Feb 18 1904

*** Banerjea S N , *A Nation in the Making* p 188

**** The *Moslem Chronicle*, January 9, 1904

the Surat Congress Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India, wrote to Viceroy Minto "It is quite impossible to see how the Congress collapse will work out, but so far everything points to the disappearance of the Extremists and to some reasonable recognition by the Moderates of our intentions I feel pretty sure that this will be the case for a time—it is a great triumph for us "*

Having split the Congress and having suppressed the radical voices by deportation of leaders like Tilak, Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh, by the enforcement of Draconian laws like the Seditious Meetings Act, 1907, the Newspapers Act, 1908, and the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908, the British rulers began consolidation of their position, on the one hand, by introducing constitutional reforms and, on the other, by encouraging communal elements and vested interests The reforms were expected to strengthen the hands loyalist Moderates in the Congress while the latter measures provided a counterpoise to any possible ambitiousness growing inside or outside the Congress

In a personal letter to Viscount Middleton on April 29, 1908, Minto mentions the possibility of winning over certain sections, "Things in India generally are much quieter, and in the 'agitated' districts, Bengal and Eastern Bengal and Assam, there is an inclination to make friends, and no doubt some of the most leading agitators can be got hold of if our own people will only show a little tact and forbearance " Further on he recommends "What we must really try to do is to strengthen the classes who have a real stake in the country—the Ruling Chiefs, the great landowners, the great interests of all sorts — they are really loyal to us, and they know the weaknesses of their countrymen much better than we do "**

It was in pursuance of this policy that Minto encouraged the Muslim deputation which was the precursor of the formation of the Muslim League The story of this deputation is too well known to be recapitulated here To get an idea how the British mind was working it is enough to recall what Minto wrote to the Prince of Wales on December 13, 1906 "The Mohammedan movement has been a most telling reply to Bengali agitation

*Morley to Minto, in Grover, B L, *op cit*, p 950
**Minto to Middleton, *ibid*, pp 252 54

and people can see well enough now that if they go too far in backing up the latter, they run the risk of running their heads against sterner stuff than they are accustomed to deal with" And the Viceroy got a pat on the back from the Secretary of State who, in a letter on October 5, 1906, wrote "Your address (to the Muslim deputation) was admirable alike in spirit, in the choice of topics and in the handling It has been thoroughly appreciated here by the press and the people It seems as if all had gone excellently It will be interesting to see how our Hindu friends take it"

The Hindu friends were quite willing to oblige Prabhu Narain the Maharaja of Banaras, offered to lead a delegation of representative Hindus to the Viceroy on the lines of the Muslim deputation led by the Aga Khan In his letter he condemned the Congress policy of agitation in a language which was most undignified, approving the deportation of Lajpat Rai and blaming the Arya Samaj for spreading sedition

The leadership of the national movement was quite aware of the provocative role of the colonial authorities in fomenting Hindu Muslim strife We have already mentioned the reaction of Surendra Nath Banerjea to Curzon's mischief Tilak also was of opinion that the British officials were behind the conflict His biographer, N C Kelkar, reports "He attributed these manifestations of radical prejudice mainly to the secret instigation of some short sighted Anglo Indian officers The policy of 'Divide and Rule', initiated by Lord Dufferin, was, according to him, at the bottom of all the mischief"*

Mohammad Ali Jinnah held the same view, too While giving evidence before the Joint Select Committee of Parliament he remarked "If you ask me, very often these riots are based on some misunderstanding, and it is because the police have taken one side or the other' **

Despite this realisation the middle class leadership of India, both Hindu and Muslim, was not able to find a way of defeating this policy Nor did they ever realise that the idiom of religion which they employed to rouse the masses developed more separateness than unity The only way they could think of

*Kelkar, N C, *Landmarks in Lokamanya's Life*, p 10.
**Quoted in Ram Gopal *Indian Muslims*, pp 158 59.

forging unity was to enter into mutual pacts about proportion of representation in the legislatures and jobs in the government offices It was a kind of recognition of polycentrism within the nation which later developed into two separate identities as a result of the machinations of the third party which was invariably able to frustrate every pact or understanding by offering a more attractive bid Thus the Lucknow Pact, so assiduously evolved by Tilak, Jinnah and Annie Besant, was defeated by the Government of India Act, 1919

The manoeuvre of the government was overwhelmed by the popular upsurge of national sentiment in the wake of the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy and the sense of betrayal among the Muslims over the question of Khilafat The question of swaraj and, in other words, the contradiction between British imperialism and Indian nationalism came to the forefront The Home Rule movement had taken the masses to a new level of consciousness and there were signs everywhere that the common man in India was ready to make sacrifices to see the last Briton out of India Gandhi had appeared on the scene and, with his new and ingenious methods of struggle, had generated a new atmosphere of hope and determination The wrong of the Punjab became the cause of the entire country even as the partition of Bengal had shaken the whole of India earlier The espousal of the cause of Khilafat by Gandhi brought the Muslims into the non cooperation movement thus breaking the imperialist alliance with the Muslim leadership Gandhi justified his support to Khilafat in the interests of Hindu Muslim unity "The Khilafat will not recur for another hundred years If the Hindus wish to cultivate eternal friendship with the Mussalmans they must perish with them in the attempt to vindicate the honour of Islam" Khilafat had shaken the entire Muslim community and no Muslim leader, however loyal to the Crown, could stop the Muslims from joining it It generated an unprecedented atmosphere which reverberated with the new slogan of 'Hindu-Mussalman ki jai' and people became intensely conscious that the blood of the Hindus and the Muslims had flown together in Amritsar

Gandhi s movement was to be strictly non violent but the organisation for it was not adequate to ward off any provocation which could manifest in violence Violence began to

surface at many places and Gandhi decided to abandon the movement after the Chauri Chaura incident in 1922 The decision came as a shock even to admirers of Gandhi and brought in its wake demoralisation and confusion Worse still, the bottled up violence' burst out in the form of communal riots, as Jawaharlal Nehru later put it Gandhi came in for criticism by many of his colleagues for imparting religious colour to the political movement which had resulted in communal violence

The whole atmospheres was filled with the poison of communal passion to the delight of the British The nationalist tide which made Gandhi a fearful adversary came to ebb The Corgress got divided and the Khilafat Committee disintegrated While the pro changers and no changers were busy arguing over entry or non-entry into councils the Hindus and the Muslims were flying at each other's throat Communal violence was confined mainly to urban areas of North India but the wide publicity given to these incidents made it a major issue Passions were further inflamed by highlighting the cases of rape and abduction so that elemental feelings were aroused smothering the still small voice of sanity What happened as a consequence is sketched by Dr Tara Chand in the following words

"The Hindu Mahasabha was gaining in popularity Madan Mohan Malaviya was resuscitating the atrophied organisation, and such Congress stalwarts as Lajpat Rai, Shraddhanand and Jayakar were gravitating towards it Lajpat Rai had despaired of Hindu Muslim unity and later Tagore endorsed his views * In the annual session of the Hindu Mahasabha at Banaras in 1923, Malaviya proposed the formation of a Hindu organisation (Sangathan) to protect Hindu interests Shraddhanand started the scheme of reclaiming the Muslim converts (Shuddhi)

"The Muslim League had been relegated to inanition But in 1913 it was prodded into activity as a result of Hindu

*Tagore, Rabindranath, 'Through Indian Eyes' (*Times of India*, April 18 1924 Transalation of an interview given to a Bengali paper). See Ram Gopal, *op cit*, p 165

Mahasabha's revival In 1923 its session was held for the first time after many years in a different place from the venue of the Congress, namely, Lucknow, where the President Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgri made a strong plea for Hindu-Muslim understanding He gave a warning that the continuance of dissensions would make Swaraj an insubstantial fantasy, 'like the pleasing sound of distant drums', and 'illusory expectation' During the session Ansari urged the framing of a national pact to ensure unity and harmony among the communities

'But the atmosphere had become vitiated Kitchlew had started the counter movement of Tabligh and Tanzim Fazli Husain advocated the conversion of the Depressed Class Hindus to Islam The Muslim Leaguers and Khilafatists took up the cry The resulting riots inflamed passions and exacerbated animosity "

It is significant to note that most of the Congress leaders, though upset over the deeds of the Muslims, did not think in terms of excommunicating them from their idea of nationalism Lajpat Rai, for instance called in question the wisdom of importing religion into politics but not of political unity of Hindus and Muslims into one national entity He had supported the Nagpur resolution endorsing Gandhi's movement which combined non cooperation and Khilafat but he did not go back on it This is what he wrote in 1924

'Unhappily during the last decade we have created an atmosphere which smells more of orthodoxy and bigotry than of rationalism and toleration The non cooperation movement itself has materially contributed to the creation of this atmosphere It was unfortunate that the Khilafat movement in India should have taken its stand on a religious rather than a political basis *There were political grounds to support it* It was still more unfortunate that Mahatma Gandhi and the leaders of the Khilafat movement should have brought religion into such prominence in connection with a movement which was really and fundamentally more political than religious The desire to seek religious sanction for the various items of the non cooperation programme was another great blunder It led directly to the revival of sectarian zeal and to the

re enthroning of influences and forces which were antagonistic to the idea of a united India "*

People like Dr Moonje, however, were in favour of setting up separate Hindu organisations to protect Hindu girls Moonje wrote about this to Jayakar but the latter was not in favour of making a noise about it In his reply he pointed out that while something positive needed to be done every care should be taken not to do anything which may aggravate the communal situation According to Jayakar his views were shared by Lajpat Rai and Malaviya also **

The general reaction in the political circles was that the British had taken advantage of the recession in the movement to launch a counter-attack in the form of fanning the embers of communalism and it should be resisted by repairing the cracks in unity Khilafatists, Bhurgri and Ansari, started work among Muslims to stem the tide The Congress appointed a committee consisting of Lajpat Rai, Ansari and Mahatab Singh (replaced by Amar Singh when Mahtab Singh went to jail) to draft a unity formula Their draft came to be known as the Solan Pact C R Das drew up the Bengal Pact The best index of the mood is that all sections of Congress pressed and persuaded Gandhi (by then released from jail) to take up the presidentship of Congress to be held at Belgaum And this was done when Gandhi had already published his views on the causes and cure of Hindu Muslim tension He had done it in reply to his communal critics Some Hindus had said "You asked the Hindus to make common cause with the Muslims on the Khilafat question That resulted in unifying and awakening the Musalmans, and now that the Khilafat is over, the awaken ed Muslims have proclaimed a kind of holy war against us Hindus" The Muslims said "We simple minded people have been unjustly treated You by your agitation won over Mahomed Ali to your side and you attacked the famous institution at Aligarh built with patient care by Sir Syed Ahmed Your boycott of the councils prevented our able men from going

*Joshi V C, (ed), *Lala Lajpat Rai, Writings and Speeches* Vol II, pp 181 82

**Jayakar, M R, *The Story of My Life*, pp 189 90

to the councils to the prejudice of the interests of our community "

Gandhi's response to all the criticisms and cogitations on this score was a confident reiteration of belief in non violence and Hindu Muslim unity expressed through an article* in *Young India* He was not at all apologetic about support to Khilafat and asserted ' Had I been a prophet and foreseen all that has happened, I should still have thrown myself into the Khilafat agitation The awakening of the masses was a necessary part of the training It is a tremendous gain I would do nothing to put the people to sleep again It should be noted that Gandhi had his eye on the masses and wanted to break out of the snares and shackles of middle class politics woven round representation In the same article he points out Surely the *millions* do not want to become legislators and municipal councillors '

On the need for unity he wrote "For me the immediate question before the country is the Hindu Muslim question I agree with Mr Jinnah that Hindu Muslim unity means Swaraj I see no way of achieving anything in this afflicted country without a lasting heart unity between the Hindus and Musalmans of India I believe in the immediate possibility of achieving it, because it is so natural, so necessary for both, and because I believe in human nature "

What was his remedy for the disease? Non violence "I am sure that if we can but revert to our faith, if we ever had any, in non violence the present tension between the two communities *will largely subside* For, *in my opinion* an attitude of non violence in our mutual relations in an indispens able condition prior to a discussion of the remedies for the removal of the tension It must be a common cause between the two communities that neither party shall take the law into its own hands, but that all points in dispute wherever and whenever they arise, shall be decided by reference either to private arbitration or to the law courts, if they wish This is the whole meaning of non violence so far as the communal matters are concerned To put it in another way, just as we do not break one another's heads in respect of civil matters, so may we not do even in respect of religious matters "

*Quoted by Tendulkar, G D *Mahatma* Vol 3, pp 130-34

Non-violence was a creed with Gandhi He was capable of quoting chapter and verse from the religious scriptures of all the communities to prove that it was enjoined upon by all religions But here he recommends it as a thoroughly secular principle as the only way of civilised living, as a basis for democratic resolution of disputes The world has known from experience that it is the only weapon if co existence is preferable to co destruction, that is why cease fire is the first call of the international community to prevent a local conflict from developing into a major war The weapon has been found not only effective but beneficial for all concerned

Lest it should be said that he recommended surrender or capitulation to the Hindus he made it clear "My non violence does not admit of running away from danger and leaving the dear ones unprotected Between violence and cowardly flight, I can only prefer violence to cowardice "

That some people had started Hindu organisations or *akhadas* as a preparation for self defence had come to his notice and he warned against such a course "The way, however, does not lie through *akhadas* Not that I mind them. On the contrary, I want them for physical culture Then they should be for all But if they are meant as a preparation for self defence in Hindu Musalman conflicts, they are foredoomed to failure Musalmans can play the same game, and such preparations, secret or open, do cause suspicion and irritation They can provide no remedy It is for the thoughtful few to make quarrels impossible by making arbitration popular and obligatory "

Could anybody committed to the cause of freedom object to this? History of the struggle since 1857 had brought home the realisation that whenever there was Hindu Muslim unity the freedom struggle had advanced and the imperialists had to beat a retreat even if it meant a few concessions The other side of it also was quite apparent that whenever there was an ebb in the struggle the tide of communal conflict rose It was also a fact that the British rulers and their Indian henchmen fanned this conflict as a part of the policy to defeat, divide and disrupt the movement In pursuance of this policy they sometimes favoured Hindus and, at others, Muslims, all the time trying to create an impression that whoever led the anti British

struggle would lose and whoever cooperated would stand to gain Immediately after 1857 they suppressed the Muslims and encouraged the Hindus But when the rising Hindu middle class started demanding a share in the administration and exhibiting signs of aspiration for freedom they brought forth first Sir Syed and then the Muslim League Just as there were quislings among the Muslims, so were there among the Hindus whose mouth watered at the possible rewards of cooperation Nothing would have suited the British so much as permanent division between the two major components of Indian nationalism Quite naturally the votaries of swaraj dwelt upon the need for mutual goodwill, understanding and unity Equally naturally the advocates of responsive cooperation with the British began to adopt a communal attitude

How did Hedgewar react in this background and what stand did he take in this situation? According to the latest officially published biography the problems of the national movement and national unity very much agitated his mind and after long and deep thinking he came to the conclusion that Hindus alone constituted the nation in India, the unity, freedom and prosperity of the Hindus alone meant swaraj

' Doctorji thought deeply over a long period on the question of national identity The world over there was no dispute over the British the German and the French being the nation in England, Germany and France respectively Why then should there be any confusion about nationhood in Hindustan? Why try to bind into one national bundle people who do not believe in common interest, common aspirations common ideals and common traditions? Why have strange expressions like nationalist Musalman and nationalist Christian come into currency? The answer that he found after deep thought and contemplation was absolutely clear, unambiguous and true to the touchstone of history Hindu society living in this country since times immemorial is the national society here and the main responsibility of this country rests with this society The same Hindu people have built the life values, ideals and culture of this country and, therefore, their nationhood is self evident ' *

*Bhishikar, C P *op cit*, p 31

So Hedgewar hit upon the solution that national unity would immediately come about if it is declared that non Hindus like Muslims and Christians do not form a part of the nation because they deny that Hindu tradition Hindu ideals and Hindu culture are theirs too This idea he further thought must be lying buried in the mind of all the Hindus and this self forgetfulness on their part is the cause of all the ills that the country and the people suffer from Once the Hindus are roused and united on the basis of this realisation all the problems would vanish

Perhaps Hedgewar at that time was too insignificant a person and his ideas too obscure to be taken note of There was hardly any reaction to what he did or said Nor is there any indication that the British government welcomed it But the seed that he sowed was the seed of a more permanent cleavage between Hindus and non Hindus than any known hitherto The Hindu Mahasabha also had not till then gone beyond claiming what they thought were the legitimate rights of the Hindus as the majority community The improvement that Hedgewar had made on the communal attitudes of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League was of a fundamental nature It fitted neatly and ideally like a ball in the socket into the divide and rule policy of the government It is relevant in this context to remember that Hedgewar belonged to the group of Moonje which was opposed to Gandhi s programme of non cooperation and Hindu Muslim unity and advocated responsive cooperation with the British government on the pattern of the Muslim League and wanted to have separate militant Hindu organisations That is why later when its manifest results began to appear the RSS began to be characterised as a pro British organisation Objectively speaking it was serving the purpose of the British It became more explicit later when the RSS characterised anti British attitude as a reactionary view The theories of territorial nationalism and of common danger which formed the basis for our concept of nation had deprived us of the positive and inspiring content of our real Hindu Nationhood and made many of the freedom movements virtually anti British movements Anti Britishism was equated with patriotism and nationalism This reactionary

view has had disastrous effects upon the entire course of the freedom movement, its leaders and the common people ' *

II

The Founder of The RSS

The foregoing birds's eye view of the cross currents of politics and social life does not fully explain the birth of the RSS Historical experience, in fact, was pressing the people more and more towards the Gandhian solution of the communal problem through mass approach which was develop ing clearer contours with the Nehruvian socio economic and democratic content taking the place of the religious motif The RSS presented a total turn about, something contrary to the logical demand of the objective situation, a course of action prompted by passions of the moment rather than understanding of the historical perspective It is therefore natural to turn to the man who founded it What was the personality that under took this task of outright repudiation of the course of history and began to forge an instrument to reverse it by reasserting the revivalist Hindu religious motif? It implied rejection of the Gandhian method—somewhat like that of the Bhakti saints of 17th century—of emphasising the common truth of all religions as a basis for settling religious differences and evolving a common front for attainment of swaraj and it stood directly opposed to Nehru's insistence on secular aspects of the struggle, relegating religion exclusively to the sphere of personal life One would naturally like to know what were the philosophical, cultural, political or personal reasons that singly or as a com bination resulted in this development The personality of Dr K B Hedgewar, who is said to be the sole inspiration and architect of the RSS, obviously attracts our attention

Hedgewar is, however unique among the prominent politicians of that era not to have left behind any personal record of his life, activities and thinking Most of his con- temporaries, including such likeminded people as Savarkar and Moonje have made endeavours to present before the public their testaments of faith by analysing history and contemporary

*Golwalkar, M S , *Bunch of Thoughts* pp 142 43

politics, thus offering reasons for arriving at their beliefs No such grounds for understanding or disputation have been left behind by Hedgewar According to the accounts given by the RSS he sought to convince people more by the force of his personality than by rational agrument An episode related by Golwalkar* indicates his way of thinking and working At a particular meeting in the early stages of the RSS a heated discussion started over the idea of Hindu Rashtra as presented by Hedgewar and a young man rather cantankerously said 'Who is so foolish as to say that this is Hindu Rashtra' Hedgewar applied a kind of closure to the discussion by asserting 'I, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, say that this is Hindu Rashtra" Golwalkar commented on this "It is no more than one sentence No particular argument and no reasoning The surprising thing is that the very utterance of these words convinced all those present and everybody agreed to take the oath and become a swayamsewak"* This makes an understanding of Hedgewar all the more imperative to understand the RSS The nature of relationship between the two partakes of the relationship between the Creator and Creation or between a guru and the cult The RSS people invariably tell us 'If you want to know Doctorji, know the RSS', and also 'If you want to know RSS, know Doctorji'. "The revered Doctorji and Sangh had become so identified with each other that in the story of his life can be had the inspiring view of the systematic development of the Sangh",** says the present RSS chief. The official biographer of Hedgewar writes "The work of the RSS and the life of Doctorji are inseparable"***

While this attitude reflects a highly authoritarian, dogmatic and totalitarian mentality, it presents almost insurmountable difficulties in the understanding of the organisation, particularly because there is hardly any reference to the man or his work in the accounts of his contemporaries whether political, social, historical or personal The followers of Hedgewar also have not felt the need of presenting any detailed objective study of his personal life As they are absolutely convinced of the total

*Shri Guruji Samagra Darshan (Hindi), Part V, pp 22 3
**Bhishikar, C P, op cit, p 5
***Ibid, p 3.

identity of Hedgewar and the RSS the biographical writings in currency are more in the nature of commentaries on the organisation in the Puranic style where stories are narrated to present ideas and not human beings

Before we come back to the various problems relevant to the subject of the present book let us recount the broad facts of Hedgewar's life, at least up to the starting of the RSS as far as they can be rescued from the enormous verbiage in which they are hidden

Keshav Hedgewar was born in Nagpur on April 1, 1889 He was the third son of a Brahmin priest, Baliram Hedgewar The family had hailed from Kundkurti, a small village in the state of Hyderabad (Deccan) several generations earlier and had been pursuing the priestly vocation The house they lived in was their only property and it too was rather dark and dingy proclaiming their poverty The circumstances in which the family migrated from the Nizam's dominions are not known The early upbringing of Keshav must have been in orthodox Hindu atmosphere as the priestly vocation continued to be pursued even by his elder brother after the death of their parents in 1902 His eldest brother, Mahadev Shastri, was a hot tempered man and the atmosphere in the house was none--too happy Very often Keshav was subjected to beating over trifling matters Naturally much respect for home and family life did not develop Even the family vocation was abhorrent to the sensitive child

A sensitive child in such circumstances would either develop sullenness or develop liking for outdoor life and activities Keshav developed extrovert habits and, quite early in life, showed signs of patriotic sentiment On the occasion of the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign sweets were distributed among school children, Keshav received the packet but threw it into the dust bin rather than eat it He also did not participate four years later in the celebration to mark the coronation of Edward VII For leading a student agitation in his school, the Neil City High School, he was expelled in 1905 To continue his schooling he got admission in the National School at Yeotmal in the Berar region with the help of Bapuji Aney and Dr Moonje But soon after that school closed down and Keshav was obliged to shift to the National School in

Poona, perhaps with the help of the same friends The family was not in a position to bear the expenses and Keshav depended on the largesse of Moonje who appreciated his daring and intrepidity, he must have seen in him a potentially useful recruit for his political activities Moonje was a great advocate of militancy and physical culture and Hedgewar had displayed keen interest in actitivities like wrestling, racing, swimming He had a well built body and had shown some prowess in street fighting He was good material for political work where brawn rather than brain decided the issues which was not uncommon in those days

After passing matriculation he stayed in Poona for a few years to earn some money so that he could pursue studies He worked as a teacher and collected some money With assurance of support from Moonje he decided to take up medical studies in Calcutta During his days in Nagpur and Poona it is said, Hedgewar had been attracted towards the terrorist cult which was very prominent in those areas His decision to go to Calcutta and pursue medical education is supposed to have been motivated partly by a desire to join some 'revolutionary' group because Calcutta was the home of most such activities. Keshav's admiration for Tilak and the Shivaji cult started by him must have turned his mind in that direction

Keshav Hedgewar was a student of National Medical College Calcutta, from 1910 to 1915 He stayed first in the Maharashtra Lodge and then in the Shanti Niketan Lodge, boarding houses started to help students coming mainly from Maharashtra These places were a centre of student politics, there were furious discussions and lot of activity It is there that he came in contact with the revolutionary terrorist groups How close he was to them is not quite clear There are two versions extant Curran writes "Hedgewar did not acquire enough importance in these activities to incur the overt wrath of the authorities No available evidence exists that he was in jail during this period in Calcutta although according to Sangh members with knowledge of these years, the British kept him under police surveillance "* The official RSS version is as follows "As soon as he reached Calcutta he was admitted to

*Curran J.A , *Militant Hinduism in Indian Politics*, p 13

the innermost circle of the Anushilan Samiti There is no doubt that he was trusted and was given several assignments involving great risk During this period he acted as carrier of arms and ammunition for the revolutionary group in the Central Provinces"* It is however admitted that "no mention anywhere is available of the revolutionary responsibilities which he carried out during this period, with who and who he came in contact and what lessons he drew from his experiences in this work'.

He also took part in social service activities He learnt Bengali language and frequently visited the Ramakrishna Mission offices During the periodic floods in the Damodar river he used to work as a volunteer in the relief organisation of the Mission By all accounts his work and behaviour impressed the prominent Bengali leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal Shyam Sunder Chakravarty and Motilal Ghosh

After receiving the diploma in medicine Keshav Hedgewar returned to Nagpur and 'for some time remained engaged in the cause of armed revolution' Bhishikar says 'By then World War I had started England was involved in war He wanted to take advantage of the situation and start armed revolt to end the slavery of the country With this in view he organised a plan and there is evidence to believe that its network spread from the Panjab to Goa But that plan could not fructify. Rather there came the bitter moment when he had to himself destroy it all'** In another context the same author puts this episode quite differently "Doctorji had tried to secure support and approval of Tilakji for the various plans of armed revolt that sprang up in his mind at the time of World War I Tilakji did not find any one of them practical"*** In the light of the latter comment the version of a close associate of Hedgewar, G M Huddar, seems to be closer to the truth Huddar writes "In Calcutta he had established contacts with some secret organisations I was myself initiated into the local revolutionary organisation by *the late V V Kelkar, an elderly advocate of Nagpur High* Court, in 1918 Though we called it a revolutionary organisa-

* Bhishikar C P *op cit* p 13
** *Ibid* p 14
*** *Ibid*, p 29

ion, it resembled more a secret conspiratorial group of young nen' * A battle-scarred general like B G Tilak did not find he visions of the raw youth worthy of serious notice And it appears Tilak's reaction cooled Hedgewar's ardour for armed revolt for ever

We have already noticed the disinclination of Hedgewar for normal family life On his return from Calcutta when a suggestion was made about marriage he turned it down He did not make use of his medical education for earning a livelihood either About his starting medical practice, Curran says that he did start but 'gradually abandoned in favour of nationalist activities' Bhishikar, however, is vague about it Curran expresses ignorance about 'the exact nature of his political activities during the next five years', that is, after his arrival in Nagpur He only reports the Sangh members saying that he had joined the local Hindu Mahasabha and 'composed pamphlets, made speeches' This period of 5 7 years has been characterised by Bhishikar as the 'formative period of the mind which later expressed itself in the form of the RSS, Of his activities and experiences he says "In the new atmosphere [illegible] simultaneously working for the Congress, [illegible] Mahasabha and many other organisations He [illegible] with the Rashtriya Utsav Mandal**, daily [illegible] organisations, akhada, vyayamshala, public [illegible] ences, public speeches etc " After 1923 he is [illegible] 'drawn more and more towards the youth orga[illegible] discussions and debates on national problem[illegible] in, he was developing more faith in thos[illegible] however, recognised that "although he had [illegible] with the elders in politics yet none of them [illegible] support the new ideas taking shape in the [illegible]

His open political work after disillusio[illegible] torial activity started with the Congress In [illegible] simultaneously be a member of the Hind[illegible] and the

* Huddar G M , ' The RSS and Netaji [illegible] *India* Oct 7, 1979 Huddar was the first [illegible] RSS

** An organisation of the same name was [illegible] communal violence in Bhiwandi (Maha[illegible] Com- misson of Inquiry

*** Bhishikar, C P , *op cit* , p 27

Congress and Dr B S Moonje was a prominent leader of the CP Congress As a Congress activist Hedgewar participated in the volunteer group that made arrangements in the 1920 session of *the Congress in Nagpur It is also asserted by the same author* that he went along with Dr Moonje to Pondicherry to see whether Aurobindo Ghosh could be persuaded to preside over the session The mission of course failed In the Nagpur Congress a resolution was recommended by the Reception Committee which said that the goal of the Congress is to establish a republic in India and to free the countries of the world from exploitation by capitalist countries According to Bhishikar the resolution had been inspired by Hedgewar and was rejected by the Congress In the absence of any other evidence it seems somewhat extraordinary that Hedgewar should move, or even support, such a resolution he was not known to think either in terms of ending capitalist exploitation or internationalism both of which are implied in the above formulation however imprecise be its character

What is known and corresponds to his generally known views is his opposition to Gandhi s insistence on non violent non cooperation and support to Khilafat He is said to have conveyed his views to Gandhi himself And yet, like many others who had reservations on these counts, he plunged into the 1921 movement He toured the district in the company of Dr Moonje and made fiery speeches for which he was arrested and tried The statement he made in the court in defence of his action was considered 'more seditious than his speech' on account of which he was being tried

The motivation behind participation in the movement was only to prove his bona fides as a patriot According to Bhishikar he joined the non cooperation movement because "he could not tolerate a situation in which somebody should confront him with the question that when thousands were going to jail to end British rule in one year where were you hiding and he should have to hang his head in shame for lack of adequate reply" * This view is endorsed by Huddar who puts it as follows

* Bhishikar, C P., *Ibid*, p 30

"It has been argued that Dr Hedgewar had joined Gandhi's movement in 1920 and was jailed This is true, but it should not be regarded as a sign of his faith in mass action It was, rather, to demonstrate that they were as unafraid of imprisonment as any other patriot having faith in a mass movement"

After coming out of prison in 1922 he began to openly criticise Gandhi for supporting Khilafat and held his policies responsible for the sufferings of the Hindus in the riots that occurred in various parts of the country, particularly the Moplah rebellion He did not show any recognition of the fact that it was an agrarian revolt against the British and the toady landlords but had been given a communal turn by political and economic vested interests In 1923 there was communal tension in Nagpur The cause was the same as at many other places that is, insistence on and objection to music before the mosque Hedgewar took a leading part in asserting that in Nagpur they would not go in for any kind of peace pact as was done elsewhere but would assert the right of the Hindus by bringing out processions with music ahead even before the mosque The leader of the agitation was really Dr Moonje and Hedgewar acted as the stormtrooper There was no riot and the religious procession called Dindi passed off peacefully It is interpreted by the RSS people as the first major victory of Dr Hedgewar In the same year he started a gymnasium called 'Maharashtra Vyayamshala' and a study circle by the name of 'Shiksha Prasarak Mandal' He had also started about the same time a volunteer organisation, Rashtriya Swayamsewak Mandal With these activities Hedgewar was approaching the starting point of the RSS In a number of meetings held under these auspices in Tilak Mahavidyalaya he put his ideas and plans before a number of friends and co workers but did not find much response

Having recounted the facts of Hedgewar's life before the foundation of the RSS we now come to the questions that arise from there We have earlier taken note of the high regard that the members of the RSS show for their first Sar Sangh chalak but a perusal of RSS literature gives an uneasy awareness that in doing so they show scant regard for facts or historical

veracity Reverence for a leader is understandable but if it leads to the kind of blatant distortions the cult tends to take on the character of mafia and everything becomes suspicious for an objective observer The first thing in this regard is the total absence of reference to any ideas, current at that time, similar to those of Hedgewar about the ideology and method of Hindu Sangathan In the next chapter we shall give details of the contribution Babarao Savarkar, the elder brother of the famous Veer Savarkar, made in the formative years of RSS and the help he rendered to Hedgewar but it finds no recognition in the Sangh literature V D Savarkar s major theoretical work, *Hindutva*, does not find as much as a casual mention References to Dr Moonje are made in a manner as if he was not a patron but a protege of Hedgewar How Bhai Parmanand facilitated the work of the Sangh in north India, particularly in the Sind, Panjab and Delhi is acknowledged nowhere While it betrays deficiency of gratitude and intellectual honesty, it smacks of a deep seated inferiority complex, a fear that if the swayamsewaks come to know of the sources of inspiration and ideology they might not have as much faith (shraddha) in Hedgewar as they have now and their loyalty may weaken

That Hedgewar was a patriot and that all his thought and action was motivated by a burning desire for freedom is repeated so frequently that it not only clogs the narrative but also gives a feeling as if his followers think that in non-RSS circles his patriotism is doubted They seem to think if people could be convinced of his patriotic bona fides the validity of his ideas would automatically stand proved Such flaunting of patriotism as a substitute for rational argument makes it somewhat suspect and one is inclined to scrutinise his life with a more searching eye We have already noted how an attempt is made to focus on association with revolutionaries but that itself raises very legitimate questions If he was so thick in the revolutionary movement why is there no mention of his name in any of the accounts of those movements? It may not have been politic to reveal the connection during the life time of Hedgewar or even till 1947 when the British rule was still there but where is the harm in making the details public after such a long passage of time? And if no worthwhile evidence is available, why perpetuate the myth? More so, when the Sangh

was started ostensibly after Hedgewar had realised the futility of those activities? Is it not an attempt to romanticise the personality to make it more attractive for the spirit of adventure in raw young men? One does not know whether the RSS people realise it or not but the way they propagate this aspect of Hedgewar's personality a doubt is created in the minds of others whether he was not mixing up with these groups to spy upon them It appears to be patently a sacrilege, an astounding suggestion to make of one who is revered by millions as a symbol of patriotism But this is the inevitable consequence of broadcasting as truth something which is based on inadequate evidence Unfounded eulogy always runs the risk of equally conjectural accusation In this context one also recalls that the RSS accounts of Hedgewar's life are sometimes over stretched to show the association of personalities like Mahatma Gandhi and Netaji Subhas with whom Hedgewar had nothing in common ideologically or organisationally (These accounts are written in a manner as if these leaders were eager to get into the good books of the RSS chief which exhibits the operation of a kind of inferiority complex)

We quote below the description of the first meeting between Subhas Bose and Hedgewar as given in the official biography of the latter It took place in 1928 when Hedgewar had visited Calcutta to participate in the Congress session of that year The RSS had not yet grown out of Nagpur and Hedgewar was no celebrity The description runs as follows

"During this session Shri Subhas Chandra Bose *attracted the attention* of Doctorji So while he was in Calcutta he met Subhas Babu and discussed the country's situation with him for about three and a half hours Doctorji himself told about this meeting in some context nearly nine years later In those days Subhas Babu was the Mavor of Calcutta Doctorji had been given only three minutes for the meeting but during the interview the talk diverted to the question of national reconstruction and the two patriots carried on for three and half hours Doctorji presented in detail his concept how the face of the country could be changed through Hindu sangathan He heard him quietly and said at the end 'I agree that this concept of yours is thoroughly sound and rational, But the Hindu society

is almost a dead society. I don't think it can again become active and militant' *

"Doctorji replied 'I am happy with just meeting you and it has given me utmost satisfaction to know that you agree with the Sangh concept You only seem to consider it apparently impossible But I have full confidence that this work would succeed' This self confident reply must have left a deep impression on the mind of Subhas Babu

"A few years later it so happened that Subhas Babu was being taken as a prisoner to Calcutta via Wardha As the signal had not been given the train stopped outside the station yard In a nearby ground the Vijay Dashami festival of the Sangh was being performed, and the swayamsewaks were coming in a route march Subhas Babu was deeply impressed by that march He had never imagined that such a scene could be witnessed in India He enquired who those people were and was told 'This is a function of Dr Hedgewar's Sangh' Subhas Babu must have then recalled the confident words of Dr Hedgewar—'I have full confidence that this work would succeed'

"Because of faith in the capacity of Doctorji probably Subhas Babu tried to meet him later in 1939 Subhas Babu thought that taking advantage of the World War II in Europe armed revolution should be taken up in India and a revolt against the British should be started He wanted to see how much help could be got from Doctorji An emissary of Subhas Babu came and met Doctorji in Nasik and later in Bombay a letter from the former was received But at that time Doctorji was very ill with double pneumonia So the meeting could not take place Subhas Babu made another effort to meet Doctorji on June 20, 1940 in Nagpur itself but, on that day, his condition was serious He came but had to return only after seeing him asleep If these two great and selfless patriots could come together and talk once again what would have been the result? Today it can only be imagined "**

*In RSS publication *Sri Guruji The Man and His Mission* a different reaction has been reported According to that version Subhas Babu is reported to have remarked "This work alone can lead the nation to regeneration"

**Bhishikar, C P *ibid*, pp 58 59

The first General Secretary of the RSS, G M Huddar, has narrated a personal experience which shows the relationship in an altogether different light He writes

' I had some contacts, though not of an intimate nature, with Netaji Subhas Bose He knew me as a soldier in the International Brigade and of my very personal and long standing relationship with Dr Hedgewar I happened to be in Bombay after the Tripuri Congress where Netaji submitted his resignation from the Congress presidentship One evening, he called me to his place in Bombay One Mr Shah, with whom I was not acquainted, was with him Netaji asked me if I would be his emissary to Dr Hedgewar, with whom he would like to have a talk He asked me to go to Nasik, where Dr Hedgewar was spending the summer with Babasaheb Ghatate, a rich *sowcar* landlord of Nagpur Mr Shah was to accompany me

' In Nasik, Babasaheb greeted me warmly and enquired about our mission I told him that we had come to see Doctorsaheb Mr Shah remained outside and I was ushered into the room where Doctorsaheb was joking and laughing with some youngsters — all volunteers of the RSS At my request the volunteers withdrew I broached the subject of my visit to him 'Netaji is very anxious to have talks with you, but the purpose is not known to me' I explained that I was not in Netaji's confidence

"Doctorsaheb protested that he had been in Nasik as he was ill and was suffering from some unknown malady I entreated him not give up this chance of an interview with a great leader of the Congress and the nationalist force in India, but he would not pay heed to me He protested all through that he was too ill to have a talk I suggested to him that one Mr Shah was with me and it would be only right and advisable that he should tell him about the genuine difficulty which, after all, was only physical illness of a kind Besides, it would help to remove any misgivings about me Otherwise Netaji might suspe[illegible] v Shrewd as
h[illegible] on the bed,
s[illegible] t stand even
the strain of a short interview Please don't [illegible]

course of history is doing less than justice to the intelligent public To point out that it is a matter of self-experienced truth may be valid in mystic or metaphysical disputation, it cannot stand the searching light of socio-economic analysis The life story of Hedgewar tells us of his visits to gymnasiums and akhadas but not of his visit to a library or a reading room He is supposed to have edited a weekly and a daily newspaper but nowhere do Sangh publicists refer to any of his writings as evidence of his erudition, knowledge or analytical calibre How was he able to evolve and construct the theoretical foundations of a movement to reverse the national political ethos as the RSS obviously aimed at? Was there some unseen force operating through Hedgewar? The question is neither malicious nor fantastic, it is another matter whether an answer can be found for it or not The assertion that it was some inspiration or spiritual vision does not pass

Thus we see that the founder of the RSS was an extrovert personality and had fought back the cramping effects of an unhappy childhood with a measure of success Not a learned man but ambitious of going places on the strength of his capacity to mobilise young boys Physical culture and combativeness were his main forte He evinced a keenness to enter the charmed circle of the revolutionary or political elite whose names were a source of inspiration for people and that drove him to seeking the company of revolutionaries in Calcutta, of the Ramakrishna Mission and the public figures of the day in Nagpur But he did not get much recognition except as a leader of youth groups who could stand up to the goonda element in the Muslim community At the age of 36 he decides upon ploughing a lonely furrow and sets up an organisation of his own to which he admits young men generally below the age of 18 However, he shows extraordinary capacity for inspiring them with a religious fervour and reverence about himself and his ideas

Chapter 3

Progress of the Poison Tree

I

HEDGEWAR'S NURSERY

On the Vijay Dashami (Dussehra) day in 1925 was born an organisation which later came to be known as the Rashtriya Swavamsewak Sangh Its basic principle, rather slogan, was 'Hinduism is nationalism'

A comment of Hedgewar reveals the mental background which led to its formation "As a result of the non cooperation movement of Mahatma Gandhi the enthusiasm in the country was cooling down and the evils in social life which that movement generated were menacingly raising their head As the tide of national struggle came to ebb mutual ill-will and jealousies came on the surface Personal quarrels raged all round Conflicts between various communities had started Brahmin-non-Brahmin conflict was nakedly on view No organisation was integrated or united The *yavan* snakes (expression used for Muslims) reared on the milk of non-cooperation were provoking riots in the nation with their poisonous hissing"* Whatever be the later embellishments, cultural or ideological, the immediate impulse behind it was the strong reaction against the Muslims and repudiation of Gandhi's approach of evolving unity among various religious communities inhabiting this land An official publication of the RSS describes the origin of the organisation in the following words :

*Quoted in Bhishikar, C P, *op cit*, p 4

"A change was coming over the country The aftermath of 1921 movement had come to Doctorji as a shock Indian Muslims had proved themselves Muslims first and Indians only secondarily so that when the Khilaphat issue was given up in Turkey, they withdrew from the allied movement of national independence The whole atmosphere was charged with Muslim fanaticism 'Allah o-Akbar' and not 'Bharat Mata ki jai' was heard everywhere Soon there were Muslim riots in Bannu, Kohat, Multan, Kanpur, Nagpur and elsewhere 'These are not Hindu Muslim riots' he would say, 'These are Muslim riots because in every single case it is they who start them and go on the offensive ' These riots culminated in the Moplah atrocities, completed with arson, loot, murder, rape and forced conversion The nation was dazed And Doctorji wondered 'Is it Khilaphat (restoration of Khalif) or Akhil afat (catastrophe for all)?' "*

Right or wrong, warranted or not in the given circumstances, such was the perception of the founder of the RSS and his associates and on that basis they embarked upon this course of action *To quote from the same publication again, they had* come to the following conclusion

"It became evident that Hindus were the nation in Bharat and that Hindutva was Rashtriyatva While wishful thinkers pretended not to see the writing across the national political firmament, the realist in Dr Hedgewar refused to dream up wishy-washy dreams The truth was out Only Hindus could free Hindusthan and they alone could save Hindu culture Only Hindu strength could save the country There was no escape from the logic of facts Hindu youth had to be organised on the basis of personal character and absolute love of the motherland There was no other way The agony of the great soul expressed itself in the formation of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh With five friends he started the day-to-day programme of RSS The great day was the auspicious Vijay Dashami day of 1925 "*

**Sri Guruji the Man and his Mission*, pp 24 25
***Ibid* p 25

Because of their peculiar propensity to exaggerate the role and greatness of Hedgewar the RSS people tend to give an impression that the entire concept of the ideology and organisation had come to the mind of the first chief fully formed as a gift of god, a divine inspiration or as a manifestation of his deep seated and burning desire for national regeneration Such a projection may suit the needs of an organisation modelled on mystic cults, but it does not correspond to facts

What happened on that particular day cannot even be described as the first shakha, as an RSS shakha is known Only five like minded people had gathered at the residence of Hedgewar to give concrete shape to the idea of setting up an organisation which could act as a nursery of militant organisers of Hindu society Those five persons, according to non-RSS sources, were Dr B S Moonje, Dr L V Paranjpe, Dr K B Hedgewar, Dr Tholkar and Babarao Savarkar The RSS publications mention only the figure (5) and not the names perhaps because all of them were Hindu Mahasabha leaders and the RSS has been shy of owning up any relationship with the Mahasabha

These names cannot be denied because there is incontrovertible evidence to testify the veracity of the information It is borne out by L V Paranjpe who wrote about this meeting in his reminiscences of Dr Hedgewar after the latter's death * Paranjpe had acted as Sar Sangh chalak of the RSS when Hedgewar had gone to jail in 1930 Later in 1945, Kashinath Pant Limaye, the then Maharashtra Sangh chalak, in his homage to Babarao Savarkar confirmed his presence in that meeting ** It can, of course, be argued that none of these people could be called a swayamsewak, they were only promoters In that sense the Sangh is correct in maintaining that "in the beginning Doctorji was the only Sangh worker"*** although they are unfair to the promoters and other early supporters when they assert that "Doctorji undertook the responsibility for organising the Hindu society deliberately, consciously and on his own inspiration but to carry it out he

*Daily *Kesari* July, 5, 1940
**Weekly *Vikram* March 31, 1945
***Bhishikar, C P, *op cit*, p 34

had no resources, no money and no well-known leader to back it".* It provides basis for the panegyric on Hedgewar's deep devotion to national regeneration and his determination to accomplish any task he took in hand that follows, but it throws a veil of obscurity on the first discussion which is not only relevant but significant for understanding the character of the organisation.

The meeting had taken stock of the work done by the Nagpur Hindu Mahasabha and its subsidiary organisations, the Hindu Swayamsewak Samiti and the Hindu Samrakshan Samiti in meeting the challenge of 'Muslim rowdyism' since the 1923 incident of Ganesh Peth mosque in the wake of which they had been set up The participants had been leaders of these organisations It was felt that whereas the challenge had been adequately met, a peculiar weakness of the educated Hindu middle class had come to light This class did not come forward for actual combat but used the poor illiterate Hindus for the purpose It was not only unfair to the latter but also, in the view of those leaders, made the former dependent upon them Therefore the idea that emerged was that the educated middle-class Hindus should be prepared for open confrontation and made combat ready so that the dependence on the poorer section is reduced

The trend of discussion is symptomatic of the class-orientation of the RSS and reflects the fear of middle-class leadership about the mass character that Gandhi was trying to impart to the national movement Even today if the class character and composition of the RSS membership is analysed it will be found to be overwhelmingly middle class drawn from sections who ordinarily harbour fear about other classes and communities and seek security in group life It is another matter that when occasion arises very few of them are found among the fighting battalion, whether it is communal confrontation, or political conflict, the RSS men concentrate on inciting others to violence and keep themselves safe in the background

It was also decided that the adults of the community could not be relied upon and therefore younger boys should be

*Ibid, p 33

enlisted for the job Whether the task was entrusted to Hedgewar or he voluntarily took it up is not very material, the upshot was that he was to be its sole incharge and the others promised necessary help At that point it was purely a local affair Even the idea of giving it a name did not occur, what to speak of the elaborate paraphernalia of a flag, an oath, a prayer, or any elal orate system of hierarchy or fund collection

In pursuance of the understanding thus arrived at Hedgewar started recruiting teenage school boys mostly in the 12-15 age group Before admitting a boy into the group he carefully scrutinised his eligibility mainly in terms of loyalty and obedience There are instances of boys desirous of joining but rejected by him He was developing a personal group, a militant gang which would not stand duality of allegiance either to persons or to principles Within a short period he made arrangement for physical training of the young recruits The venue of training was the place in Nagpur where now stands the Hedgewar Bhawan, the headquarters of the RSS The place was then known as Salubai Mohite's *bara* and was lying vacant and unused, cluttered up with rocks and stones To make it usable as playground the boys cleaned it up themselves under the leadership of Hedgewar The activitity at this new place, the first Sanghsthan was the real beginning of the shakha programme Thus the de facto Sangh shakha started only in early 1926, a few months after the de jure date of birth

The programmes and activities in which the new recruits were involved were calculated to maintain their interest and deepen their attachment to the leader, Hedgewar He took them out for picnic, swimming and out door activities and supervised their physical training in the shakha The intellectual exercise consisted mainly of stories of Hindu heroes like Shivaji emphasising the bravery and the determination and sense of sacrifice displayed by them in their confrontation with their Muslim adversaries Hedgewar continued his other social and political activities, all the time on the look out for young sters whom he could recruit and the elders whose sympathies he could enlist for the new venture

The activities of Hedgewar s corps were not different from similar other groups but it had a special attraction for the youth because, unlike other volunteer organisations, he did not

employ his boys to do small chores for political and social organisations dominated by others It gave them a sense of importance and independence so that they felt superior to other volunteers Hedgewar's boys were prepared to do anything for themselves but they were at nobody's beck and call

Thus the shape of the organisation began to develop Hedgewar found encouraging response to the experiment The idea had developed a local habitation and needed a name The problem engaged his attention in the early months of 1926 A meeting was called to decide the issue and, after considerable discussion, it was decided that it should be named Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh Babarao Savarkar preferred to call it Hindu Swayamsewak Sangh particularly because the volunteer organisation set up by Congress at the Ahmedabad session of 1921 bore that name Hedgewar insisted on the word Rashtriya because that would in the first place, confuse Congressmen and secondly, signify the assertion that Hindu and Rashtriya were synonymous Hedgewar's view prevailed and the organisation got its name on the Ram Naumi day (the birthday of Shri Ram Chandra, the Hindu god hero of the Ramayana) A flag was also adopted which in its colour and shape is supposed to be the flag of Ram Chandra It had been used by Shivaji also and symbolised the Hindu traditional values A prayer, in mixed Hindi Marathi language* had been composed and began to be sung every day at the end of the shakha It ends with two slogons—(i) Rashtra guru Samarth Ramdas ki jai and (ii) Bharat mata ki jai The preponderance of Shivaji as the ideal and hero, the flag and the prayer with its end slogan naturally gave it a Maharashtrian colouring That is why there is a wide spread opinion that the RSS aims at revival of the Peshwa rule

The year 1927 saw the RSS taking new strides The most important activity of the year was a two month training camp held from April 15 to June 15 Twenty swayamsewaks were given training in the use of lathi, sword, javelin and dagger There were also courses on PT, *surya namaskar*, lezim etc Games played were kabaddi and kho kho Lectures were held to instil in the trainees the ideas of Hindu nationalism, the futility of Gandhian methods and the disloyalty to nation on the part of Muslims and other non Hindus Tales about

*See Appendix I

Shivaji's prowess and Rana Pratap's sacrifice as told by the British writers like Col Todd constituted a major part of this process of indoctrination The main burden of the whole curriculum was that the Hindus were unorganised, liberal, generous and peaceable because of which the Hindu society had suffered at the hands non Hindus And the only panacea for the ills of Indian nation—which is the same thing as the Hindu society—was the binding of Hindus into a militant organisation so that others should develop an attitude of awe and respect for it Patriotism lay in making every sacrifice to instil the fear of god in the minds of non Hindus who were bent upon destroying Hindu society

In the same year there was a riot in Nagpur It is worth while quoting at length the RSS version of this incident, not only because after it the Sangh spread rapidly in and around Nagpur but also because it reflects the organisation's approach to the problem The description given by Bhishikar first points to the general aggressiveness of the Muslim community and then goes on,

'Stones were thrown at Doctorji's house He was also receiving letters threatening to kill him Tension was growing in the atmosphere And the Muslims hatched a conspiracy to bring out a massive procession on September 4, 1927 (when the Hindus would be observing Mahalaxmi festival in their homes) and indulge in rioting The procession was scheduled for the afternoon when the Hindus would be resting after lunch The Sangh workers got wind of that plan and knew that the procession was going to be attended by riot Doctorji was personally out of Nagpur on that day The procession was to pass through Mhal area an educated middle class locality On both sides of the route there were a number of narrow lanes The processionists were equipped with lathis, javelins, knives, daggers, etc Those who wanted to indulge in violence and loot raised thunderous slogans of 'Allah o Akbar' and 'Deen Deen' and attacked a house situated in one of the narrow lanes But at the entrance itself they got a thorough beating Thereafter they got a thrashing at every lane entrance Several rioters had their heads broken The procession broke up and people began to run The fleeing goondas beat up the lone Hindus

The swayamsewaks having been nursed and trained Hedgewar began to think of sending them out as carriers of the Sangh infection to other parts of the country too A small beginning was made in that direction when three of his close swayamsewaks volunteered to go to Banaras Hindu University as students and in that capacity start Sangh work there It has been heard from quite reliable people that the expansion programme had been undertaken at the instance of, or at least with the encouragement of, well to do sympathisers who promised to extend financial support to such volunteers In the BHU, for example, support was assured by Madan Mohan Malaviya himself who not only gave facilities to the students sent by Hedgewar but also, later on, provided premises within the campus for offices of the RSS One of the three swayamsewaks who thus went to Banaras was P B Dani (known in Sangh circles as Bhaiyyaji) who later became the Sar Karyavah (General Secretary)

The year 1929 has a momentous importance in the history of India Jawaharlal Nehru became the Congress President and the Congress declared complete independence as its goal Jawaharlal's presidential address gave a new revolutionary dimension to the national struggle by placing it in the context of the world wide struggle between the forces of imperialism and the democratic aspirations of people struggling to rid themselves of exploitation Hedgewar who was said to have been among the promoters of an anti capitalist resolution at Nagpur Congress in 1920 did not react to this development at all So far as the historians of the RSS are concerned all this was not worthy of taking notice For them, it seems, the only relevant parts of the history of the freedom struggle were the failure of the Khilafat and non cooperation movements and the Hindu-Muslim conflicts that occasionally showed their ugly face

In the history of the RSS the year is important because it gave shape to its organisational structure The need had been *felt because with the expansion of work personality clashes* and temperamental differences among the leading members began to appear Many details are not available except that Anna Sohoni, the man who had evolved the system of physical training for RSS had withdrawn from the organisation A number of shakhas had been started each under a Sangh chalak In the

absence of constitutional provision about the relative authority of the various functionaries and a well defined line of command, it was feared, fissures and tensions might grow and wreck the organisation It was necessary to make everybody understand whose word would prevail and how decisions about policies and programmes would be taken The organisational structure of the Sangh needed to be formalised to legitimise the line of command

A meeting of prominent RSS workers was therefore held on November 9 and 10 to decide these issues It decided against the 'cumbersome clap trap of internal democracy' and opted for a centralised authority based structure On the suggestion of Appaji Joshi of Wardha it was decided that Hedgewar should henceforward be called Sar Sangh chalak, the supreme director This institution was considered to be enough because all those present thought that Hedgewar who had really built the RSS brick by brick should be invested with supreme authority unchallengeable by anybody And he could also later expand or elaborate the structure as and when required The principle was called *Ek chalak anuvartitva* (following one leader) and was explained to the swayamsewaks by V V Kelkar who told them that it was on the lines of the traditional Hindu joint family system and was most appropriate for an organisation wedded to reviving and rejuvenating the Hindu way of life It is rather difficult to distinguish it from what in modern terminology is called the 'Fuehrer principle followed by the Fascists in Italy and the Nazis in Germany

We have taken note of the RSS silence over the new orientation of the national movement with Jawaharlal Nehru as Congress President But Hedgewar was shrewd enough to realise that the events of Lahore could not just be wished away The RSS, therefore tried to infiltrate into the mainstream while side tracking the Nehruvian course It could not be beyond the mind of its leadership that better relations should be established with those Congressmen who wanted to check the steps of Nehru People of Hedgewar s way of thinking had a decade ago attempted to thwart Gandhi s path and had partly succeeded There were no doubt rumblings of resentment over Nehru s speech although the euphoria generated by the Lahore resolution overwhelmed them On the other hand it must have

been felt that total disregard of the developments, particularly of the historic independence resolution, would immediately and totally isolate them from patriotic India

In the circumstances, the first major step Hedgewar took after being anointed as the Sar Sangh chalak was to send a circular to all the shakhas that the Congress decision about observing January 26, 1930 as the 'Independence Day' should be complied with because it was acceptance on the part of the Indian National Congress of the RSS goal The circular read ' That the Indian National Congress too has adopted our goal of Independence naturally gives us immense joy It is our duty to cooperate with any organisation working for the cause Therefore on the evening of 26 1-1930 all the shakhas of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh should hold rallies of swayamsewaks at their respective places and worship the national flag, that is, the Bhagwa Jhanda Through speeches it should be explained what is the meaning of independence and why we should work with that end in view The rallies should conclude by complimenting the Congress for accepting the goal of independence "*

The circular clarifies the attitude as well as the intention of Hedgewar who sought to make his followers believe that adoption of the goal of independence was a victory for the RSS It should be noted that sending written circulars is not a normal practice in the RSS even today what to speak of those days of infancy It was therefore a deliberate calculated move to allay the suspicions of public and not a spontaneous response of a patriotic mind as the disciples of Hedgewar would like us to believe

There is no mention in the circular of the conceptual differences with the Congress but the instruction to the shakhas implies that only the Sangh concept of nationalism and national independence was to be projected, the flag to be honoured was not to be the tricolour which had been adopted by the whole nation as the symbol of the struggle for independence The occasion was thus to be utilised for propagation of the Sangh ideology and not the ideas that inspired the Lahore resolution on independence Never after that first year did the RSS

*Quoted in Bhishikar, C P , *op cit* , p 71

it as Hedgewar's credentials as a partriot or to prove that the RSS had participated in the struggle for independence as they do In spite of the words in the above mentioned circular that 'it is our duty to cooperate with any organisation working for the cause' (of independence) it was made public that the RSS would not officially participate in the movement So participation of Hedgewar and his associates cannot be taken to be an expression of solidarity or identification with the struggle Had Gandhi known of their attitude he would have refused him permission to join it, he would have told Hedgewar that there could be no satyagraha with mental reservations And Hedgewar had carried his differences along with him into jail and used the period of internment to make contacts with other satyagrahis to persuade them away from the path of Gandhi towards the Sangh shakha He used these contacts to spread the RSS shakhas in the four districts of Vidarbha

The RSS maintained close contacts with the Hindu Maha sabha at that time and Hedgewar continued to be one of its secretaries The Mahasabha leaders were invited for special lectures on current political situation so that the response of the RSS was generally identical with their views Hedgewar had joined the 1930 movement but not the boycott of the Simon Commission earlier to that In 1931 after the Round Table Conference Dr Moonje was invited to the Nagpur RSS shakha to give his views about the Conference It is well known that he did not see eye to eye with the Gandhian path of mass struggle but preferred to outbid Muslim League in the court of the British in the name of responsive cooperation The speeches that Hedgewar made in those days talked of the threat to the Hindus rather than in terms of threat to India In August that year the RSS was pressed into service to look after the session of the Hindu Mahasabha in Akola It is they who defended the presidential procession against stone throwing from the public

During 1931 the RSS had new accretion of strength Babarao Savarkar, who had been ever since his release from prison in 1922 organising Hindu youth under the banner of Tarun Hindu Sabha, decided to merge his organisation into the RSS The decision was prompted partly by the fact that the organisation was not working well because of his ill health and

inability to undertake long tours The work of Hedgewar's boys at Akola must have been another argument favouring the decision as he was already convinced that there should not be a multiplicity of Hindu youth organisations As a result there was a spurt of Sangh shakhas in CP Babarao was also instrumental in securing support for the RSS at Banaras The shakha started by Dani and others was strengthened when he persuaded Bhaurao Damle, a renowned scholar, to become the Sangh chalak of Banaras

During the next year, the Hindu Mahasabha connection opened out new avenues to carry the organisation in north and western India At its Delhi session it passed a resolution commending the activities of the RSS and emphasing the need to spread its network all over the country Bhai Parmanand had called an all-India Hindu youth conference (Hindu Yuvak Parishad) in Karachi He wrote to Babarao Savarkar to bring Hedgewar to Karachi The Mahasabha leaders in those days had started looking upon the RSS as an extension of its politics in the sphere of youth and found Hedgewar an appropriate man for the purpose The Karachi conference passed a resolution that 'Sangh work should be expanded all over the country' Hedgewar stayed there for six days and had extensive discussions with the leaders as well as the youth that had gathered there mainly from Sind and Panjab provinces The result was not very encouraging in terms of establishing shakhas because only one at Karachi could be started and that too closed down soon after It however provided him valuable contacts with whose help the Sangh work spread in the area a few years later Bhai Parmanand's son, Mahavir, and son in law, Dharam Vir, provided the basic nucleus for later expansion

Babarao Savarkar in those days used to spend part of his time in Delhi for the Mahasabha work He helped in starting the shakha in Delhi and arranged for the stay of the Sangh organiser in the Hindu Mahasabha Bhawan there His help, however, proved much more effective in the Maharastra area of Bombay Presidency Savarkar invited Hedgewar to Bombay and provided him the contacts in various cities and towns of the region he accompanied Hedgewar to many places During his tour of the area Hedgewar was accompanied by Nathuram

Godse, the assassin of Gandhi Curran reports "One of his advisers on this tour was Nathuram Godse, who sixteen years later was to fire the pistol that killed Mahatma Gandhi Godse *had joined the RSS in 1930, winning prominence as* a speaker and organiser, he left the Sangh in 1934 because Hedgewar refused to make the RSS a political organisation "*

Dadarao Parmarth, a bovhood friend of Hedgewar who had joined him to work full time, was entrusted the organisational responsibility in the area His pronounced sympathies with Mahasabha politics and the attitude of reverence towards Savarkar brothers drew for him the sympathy and support of Brahmins most of whom were proud Savarkarites Thus he was able to create a strong base for Sangh in that region Poona developed into a kind of second headquarters of the RSS and by 1935 a second training camp started being held there, besides Nagpur

These activities must have come to the notice of the Congress because several Congressmen particularly in CP area, had started participating in them The divergence between the Mahasabha and the Congress was growing and there was a *strong feeling in Congress circles* that the Sangh and Mahasabha were accentuating communal tendencies in politics In 1932 itself the CP government had declared the activities of *the Sangh communal and objectionable and prohibited the* participation of government employees in its activities

In 1933 Jamnalal Bajaj wrote a long letter to Hedgewar *seeking clarification about the ideological and political stand of* his organisation on the problems facing the country and the national movement Instead of sending a written reply Hedgewar preferred a personal meeting Bajaj met him at Nagpur but it seems the outcome was not satisfactory In June 1934 the Congress passed a resolution forbidding members of Congress from joining the RSS, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League Later in the year, in December, there was an *RSS camp at Wardha and Appaji Joshi arranged that Gandhi* should pay a visit to the camp Joshi was also a member of Congress and hoped to enlist the support of the Mahatma The latter was not averse to the visit because he wanted to have a

* Curran J A *op cit*, pp 18 19

personal view of the organisation The next day Hedgewar met Gandhi in person but found him rather sceptical and unimpressed The RSS represents this meeting as a mere exchange of opinion "There is no question of scoring points in such meetings Leaders who talk with mutual confidence and goodwill try to understand each other's point of view and to remove misunderstandings if there be any Doctorji wanted that the Congress should not obstruct Sangh work Gandhiji also wanted to know what were motivations of an organisation which brought about such amazing transformation in human thinking and behaviour, how it carried on its activities, what was its relationship with politics and what kind of a man was the Sar Sangh chalak of the RSS' *

Obviously Gandhi was not fully satisfied because he did not advise the Congress to permit Congressmen to join the RSS He was too shrewd not to see through the game, too honest to pay an undeserved compliment and too large hearted to grudge a person or party an opportunity for a change of heart He kept quiet and did not oblige Hedgewar with a certificate he perhaps looked for A very specific question which he put in that meeting was about the sources of Sangh finance The reply, as usual, was that they depended solely and entirely on the funds collected through *guru dakshina* There is no evidence available that this was enough to satisfy the curiosity of Gandhi but that he had heard people expressing doubts in that regard is clear from the question itself Thus at a time when the national movement had taken new strides in the wake of the Simon Commisson boycott, the 1931 Satyagraha with the attitude to total ideological confrontation with imperialism, the RSS was standing on the other side of the fence in the company of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League And there were serious apprehensions about the sources of its finance in the highest quarters The belief was wide spread that all those who opposed the freedom struggle under the leadership of the Congress were lackeys of the imperial power. It was not altogether unfounded

It would not be wrong to conclude that the Sangh was adopting a recalcitrant anti Congress posture because the latter was turning more and more towards socialist ideas under the

* Bhishikar, C.P, *op cit*, p 98

influence of Jawaharlal Nehru A regular socialist group had emerged in the form of Congress Socialist Party in 1934 and was spreading its ideas throughout the country The presidential addresses of Jawaharlal at Lucknow and Faizabad Congresses had caused wide spread consternation among the conservative circles inside and outside the Congress as also in the corridors of colonial power Whether the RSS was acting on its own conservative instinct or was being prompted by the votaries of reactionary ideologies cannot be definitely stated but Hedgewar was in those days feverishly exhorting the swayamsewaks to spread out in the country at a fast speed because 'the time is running out"

Curran reports "The years between 1937 and 1940 are the years of feverish expansion of the RSS work and by 1940 when Hedgewar died it had developed an all-India character Organisers were sent into Delhi Province, the Punjab, United Provinces and Bihar Their efforts were aided materially by the rising storm clouds of Hindu Muslim tension that were casting a lengthening shadow over the political land scape, particularly in the northern areas RSS propaganda became increasingly anti Muslim, and many Hindus responded to its appeal In 1938 there were 400 RSS centres in Maharashtra and North India, with a membership of 40,000

"In 1939, Dr Hedgewar placed Sangh activities on an all India basis In that year he directed that swayamsewaks be sent into Madras city In 1940 organisers were sent into other large towns in the Tamilnad area In 1939, and 1940, representatives were sent also to Belgaum, Bijapur, Hubli and Mangalore in the Karnatak region No serious attempts were made, anywhere in the country, to proselytize outside the large towns In the towns were the segments of society upon which the RSS was centering its attention university students and shop-keepers and clerks of the lower middle classes Concentration on these groups produced results, in 1940, an RSS spokesman claimed that the number of volunteers approximated 100 000 "*

Another important factor that speeded up the growth of the RSS during this period was the patronage of V D Savarkar Hedgewar was his admirer and had met him while he was in detention at Ratnagiri After his release in 1937 Savarkar had

* Curran J A, *op cit* p 19

plunged into the Hindu Mahasabha activity In November 1937 he came to Akola to preside over the CP Berar Hindu Conference held there Hedgewar requested him to visit the RSS shakha of the town which he did * Savarkar was happy to see the discipline and militancy and made it point to go and speak in the Sangh shakha wherever he went He patronised and encouraged them ** So did the other prominent leaders of the Mahasabha S P Mookherjee addressed the Lahore shakha in 1940 and is reported to have said 'I see in this organisation the one silver lining in the cloudy sky of India' ***

These visits, particularly of Savarkar, were a shot in the arm at a time when the national mood was averse to a sterile activity not issuing into action Savarkar s appreciation of the RSS was considered enough of an argument to silence the impatient young men who at times pressed the question why the RSS was satisfied with a meaningless ritual when the nation was on the move Even Mahasabhaites were militant, at least in denouncing the Muslim League and the Congress Therefore even anti Congress young enthusiasts pressed for some action They were adequately silenced with the answer 'Wait our time has not yet come Even the great revolutionary Savarkarji appreciates the work we are doing'

As the RSS grew out of Maharashtra its Marathi colouring became irksome and a hindrance to expansion One reason why after the Karachi conference of 1932 the expected expansion did not take place in north India was that Hindus who responded to the Sangh in those areas were mostly under the influence of the Arya Samaj for whom the idolatrous rituals and practices of the Sangh were an anathema Dr Hedgewar used to carry with him an idol of Hanuman and this was not liked in these circles Necessary changes were therefore brought about, the prayer was changed to Sanskrit **** The worship of Hanuman was abandoned and insistence on showing respect to rituals was given up

This was a major advance for the RSS Its character underwent a transformation from regional to all India In his

* Dhananjay Keer, *Life and Times of Veer Savarkar*, p 229
** *Ibid* pp 40 42
*** Madhok Balraj *Portrait of a Martyr*, pp 28 29
**** As quoted in Bhishikar C P *op cit*, p 71

last speech to the trainees of the Nagpur OTC in 1940 Hedgewar said 'I see before my eyes today a miniature Hindu Rashtra' Trainees had come there from all over the country except Assam, Orissa and Jammu and Kashmir But its ideological identification became more pronounced with the Hindu Mahasabha, a communal organisation, thus isolating it further from the mainstream of national struggle To break this isolation it was not possible to give up the path pursued so far because it was not in the nature of the organisation What could be done was to wean away as many young men from going over to the Congress and socialist organisations as possible by expanding the shakha network The Muslim League resolution demanding Pakistan came as god's own gift to inject life into the RSS Instead of defeating the League imperialist conspiracy by adding their energy and prowess to the mass movement led by the Congress they preferred to play into their hands by becoming the other side of the communal coin

II

Come Golwalkar

June 20, 1940 Hedgewar's condition had taken a serious turn The doctors were making efforts to control the disease but without much success A last desperate effort was to be made by lumbar puncture Hedgewar felt that he might not survive the operation He called Madhorao Golwalkar and handed over to him a slip of paper on which was written "Before giving this body finally in the hands of doctors, I wanted to tell you that hereafter you look after the organisation and shoulder the whole responsibility *

Thus succession was decided upon by Hedgewar one day before he passed away There was no question of any murmur of dissent He had been entrusted the sole authority over the organisation a decade ago by the same members and leaders of the RSS who could be considerd eligible The founder Sangh chalak had already more or less made it known that he would

* Saxena Surendra Bahadur *A Study of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh* a dissertation submitted to the Agra University in 1959 (un published) p 24

take that decision and everybody was reconciled to it Since 1937 he had been passing on more and more responsibility to Golwalkar The latter accompanied him on all his tours and was asked to deliver speeches in all the shakhas they visited In those days Hedgewar s health was giving way and he was finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the pressure of work which was expanding almost in direct proportion to the deterioration in his health Golwalkar who had been nominated the Sar Karyavah (General Secretary) was therefore called upon to handle most of the correspondence with the other centres and interviews with people he also looked after the ailing leader besides supervising the daily routine of the RSS He was made incharge of the training camps too Golwalkar began to stay in those camps in place of Hedgewar who because of ill health could not stand the strain that provided him the opportunity to establish rapport with the growing crop of Sangh activists and also to understand the mechanism through personally handling it Golwalkar had been groomed for the job

Who was Golwalkar? Here is a brief account of his life

'Golwalkar was born on February 19 1906 in a small village near Nagpur Like the other chief figures of the RSS he is a Maharashtrian Brahmin His father was a school teacher, who decided that he should prepare himself for a life of science In acceding to this decision the boy sowed the seed of a mental conflict At an early stage in life, Golwalkar developed an avid interest in the study of spiritualism When barely in his teens, he began to study, in his free time, the Vedas and other religious Hindu works under the guidance of the Superintendent of Schools in Nagpur The satisfaction derived from these studies tempted him to devote his life to them but he could not bring himself to oppose his father s desires

He entered Banaras Hindu University in 1924 His field of academic concentration was biology and zoology He proved a brilliant student and received his B Sc degree in 1926 and his M Sc degree in zoology in 1928 standing first in the examination The University soon afterwards appointed him a teacher in zoology a position he retained until 1933 According to RSS informants Golwalkar was a popular teacher at Banaras where

he acquired the name 'Guruji', by which he is known today among Sangh volunteers

"Golwalkar's contacts with the RSS commenced soon after he began teaching at the University He met Hedgewar on the latter's visit to Banaras in 1929. Golwalkar joined the Sangh in 1931 In 1933, at Hedgewar's request, he resigned his University post and returned to Nagpur to work at RSS headquarters. With Hedgewar's encouragement, he also studied law and received his LL B degree in 1935 from the University in Nagpur During the next two years, he practised law while remaining active in RSS work.

"In 1937 Golwalkar left the RSS because his spiritualistic inclinations could be no longer contained He moved to Bengal and there became a disciple of Swami Akhandanand at Sargachi In obedience to the Swami's wishes, Golwalkar allowed his hair and beard to remain uncut, a practice he maintains to this day. His contentment with his new existence was shattered by the sudden death of the Swami, only a few months after he had joined him Falling into a state of extreme mental depression and indecision, he returned to Nagpur to seek advice of Hedgewar

"The RSS leader persuaded Golwalkar that his obligation towards society could be best discharged in the Sangh, which Golwalkar subsequently rejoined Hedgewar's confidence in the younger man mounted steadily."*

Why did Hedgewar pick on this young man to head the organisation after he was gone? The RSS people provide no satisfactory answer to this question except by referring to some mysterious faculty possessed by Hedgewar for spotting the right person and then grooming him for the job Surely that is no answer though it is in line with all the answers to all the questions put to them Golwalkar was not the seniormost or the most experienced of his colleagues There was Appaji Joshi who had stood by him through thick and thin and had played a major role in giving shape to the Sangh structure which put all the power in Hedgewar's hands There were Keshav Apte and Dadarao Parmarth who had given ample proof of their organis-

* Curran, J A, *op cit*, pp 20 21

ational abilities and had taken up full time Sangh work much earlier There were people like Babarao Savarkar and Narayan Savarkar, who could be idolised by the votaries of Hindu Sangathan Kashinath Pant Limaye and V V Kelkar in Poona who had been instrumental in preparing the ground for Sangh in Maharashtra were also there

What was the special quality in Golwalkar that he was preferred to others? The question is important because for a cult like organisation, which the RSS happens to be, the understanding of the personality of the leader is of fundamental importance His devotion to the motherland or to the cause of Hindu regeneration could not be considered superior to that of all those who were bypassed In fact, he had shown more inclination for seeking personal salvation than national independence Till the time that he appeared as the RSS general secretary there is no evidence of his showing any interest in public life or national affairs By temperament he was poles apart from Hedgewar While the Sangh chief was an extrovert and essentially a political being, Golwalkar was more inward looking and given to spiritualist pursuits Around that time Hedgewar was talking in terms of more and more activism How did he think Golwalkar would be able to make the Sangh a potent instrument of change?

One possible explanation is that Hedgewar, sick of pulls and pressures exerted by his political patrons and seniors, wanted to hand over the reins of the organisation to a person who was not under obligation to any of them It is well known that he was trying to detach RSS from the Hindu Mahasabha, ironically at a time when Savarkar whom he admired a great deal was at its head He took advantage of his personal association with Savarkar but probably resented being treated as a junior, a mere youth organiser, in the Mahasabha circles He must also have been frustrated by the unending bickerings between Moonje and Savarkar and between Savarkar and Bhai Parmanand There were disputes over petty matters like control over property and appointment of office bearers It could reasonably occur to him that the edifice he had built with so much care and sacrifice may not be sucked into the whirl pool of the quarrels of the old maids of the Mahasabha Anybody prone to be influenced by any of the Mahasabha

he have sat satisfied with mere verbal war against vivisection of India without bringing the RSS into the field for offering bitter resistance like the Rajput heroes of yore who are presented to the swayamsewaks as models of bravery and patriotism? If that was the vision of Hedgewar about the role of the RSS one cannot be too sure of his own bona fides You fill a whole community with hatred and contempt against those who either demand partition or think of conceding it (like Rajaji or the CPI) andwhen the British rulers decide on partition you sit quiet hur ing abuses at your own people without a word against those whol actually perpetrate the crime

All this, including Hedgewar's reasons for passing the torch on to Golwalkar, would remain in the sphere of speculation The hard fact is that Golwalkar did display extraordinary calibre as an organiser and reared the sapling handed down to him by Hedgewar into a mighty tree with branches extending into all directions of Indian life It may not have roots and it may not yield fruit, but it casts its shadow, menacing or comforting whatever you may like to call it, over the entire nation And the credit for this goes entirely to Golwalkar

The major contribution which he made to the enrichment of the RSS arsenal of ideas was to develop the anti communist, anti socialist dimension 'Not socialism but Hinduism' is his key slogan, as the direct descendant of Hedgewar's slogan 'Hinduism is Nationalism' The anti communist potential of the RSS was first noticed and assessed by an American, J A Curran,* who after a special study of the RSS around the year

*This author it is now well known was a high official of the CIA The CIA had been created as an espionage agency during World War II especially to bring the war to a conclusi n by securing some arrangement with Nazi Germany so that the advancing Soviet forces may not gain foothold in the heart of Europe The project failed but the agency was not disbanded One of the tasks assigned to it by the US government immediately after the war was to survey the post war scene with a view to evolving a policy for rolling back Soviet communism wh ch in the cold war terminology was described as communist imperialism

The agency studied and analysed the situation in the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa to make an assessment of the developments after the withdrawal of colonial power There was anxiety that the enormous problems of poverty and backwardness may press these countries to become socialist and therefore anti American

considered worthy of support by most of those who can bestow largesse And the credit for this goes entirely to Golwalkar

When Golwalkar took over there were about 50 shakhas and 100 000 swayamsewaks By the time of his death there were over 10,000 shakhas with a total membership of about a million The number cannot be precise because the RSS does not observe the system of maintaining a regular record of membership, nor does it obtain any fixed membership fee which could provide the basis for calculation Nevertheless the expansion is enormous in proportions Besides the number of inactive swayamsewaks, those who do not attend regular shakha, runs into many more millions The RSS has already branched out into political, social, religious, educational, labour and other fields and set up about 50 front organisations The work of the RSS has been extended to foreign countries where overseas Hindus are enlisted into its front organisation known as the Bharatiya Swayamsewak Sangh

All this must have entailed lot of planning and thinking and enormous hard work Golwalkar was always on the move He used to tour round the country twice in a year and this he did for all the 33 years that he was Sar Sangh Chalak Even if there were a brains trust somewhere else and he were given computerised analysis to devise strategy the importance and personal contribution of the man cannot be minimised Credit must be given where it is due

And yet one cannot fail to notice that a movement, an organisation, claiming to be deeply patriotic and ostensibly desirous of making India free, remained absolutely listless at a time of Indian history when momentous developments were taking place all around When the nation pressed forward with all its might to reach the goal of complete independence, when every ounce of national energy was required to be thrown into that struggle, the RSS was acting as a dam to hold up the energies of lakhs of young men, a kind of brake on the movement

The political aspirations of India in that period were finding expression in three main directions Nationalist India had rallied round the Congress which had sensed that the moment of tryst with destiny was approaching and was bracing

itself to meet the coming challenge and opportunity by giving a concrete form to its goal, freedom was being spelt out in terms of social transformation in the interest of common man as also the means and methods to be employed for realising those aspirations The whole nation was sought to be moved by taking all people into confidence irrespective of religion, caste, creed, sex or language Having come to realise the significance of India s freedom as a part of history's pressure to break the shackles of imperialism and fascism, the Congress was fast becoming in the hands of Gandhi and Nehru, a crucible for forging a framework of national and international policies The crisis that had overtaken the world, and, within that context British imperialism was not being looked upon in a spirit of bargain but as an occasion to assert India's views on democracy and freedom The country, the youth in particular, was seething with a new awakening

Subhas Bose had broken away from the Congress and was trying to carve out his own path to national independence He had no major difference on objectives but was impatient with the peaceful methods which Gandhi insisted upon Treating the enemy of the enemy as a friend, he planned to join hands with Germany, Japan and Italy or whoever responded by extending the hand of cooperation in breaking the chain of British imperialist power in India He had, in his wisdom, postponed the decisions on the question of imparting socio-economic content to the concept of freedom till after the end of the British rule If at all there was an equation of anti-Britishism as patriotism it was represented by Subhas in those days Ironically enough the RSS, which in those days stoutly repudiated this view as negative and reactionary, is posing to be a champion of Subhas Bose The RSS motive is certainly not to praise Subhas but to denigrate Nehru He had discussion with Jinnah and Savarkar to resolve the Hindu Muslim problem and thus clear the way for a united Indian assault on the British power He wanted to seek the cooperation of the RSS also and we have already noticed how Hedgewar avoided meeting him Illness is too lame an excuse because if the motivation to cooperate with freedom fighters were strong enough Golwalkar could be asked to have negotiations with him Wasn't he looking after the rest of the RSS work ?

The third was the attitude of the communalists who were also operating on the opportunity syndrome that 'their peril is our opportunity' but they used it to bargain for jobs, contracts, representation etc for their respective communities League and Mahasabha leaders were both offering responsive cooperation to the British government on the basis of the promises they could extract from the rulers

Of the position of the communalists, the only people standing outside the growing ranks of committed anti imperialists, Jawaharlal Nehru has written "There was a fundamental difference between the outlook of the Congress and that of the religious communal organisations Of the latter the chief were the Muslim League and its Hindu counterpart, the Hindu Mahasabha These communal organisations, while in theory standing for India's independence, were more interested in claiming protection and special privileges for their respective groups They had inevitably to look to the British government for such privileges, and this led them to avoid conflict with it The Congress outlook was so tied up with India's freedom as a united nation that everything else was secondary, and this meant ceaseless conflict or friction with the British power Indian nationalism, as represented by the Congress, opposed British imperialism The Congress had further developed agrarian, economic and social programmes Neither the Muslim League nor the Hindu Mahasabha had ever considered any such question or attempted to frame a programme Socialists and Communists were of course interested in such matters and had their own programmes which they tried to push in the Congress as well as outside "*

All these three segments of political India had their various perspectives according to which they acted But there is no indication anywhere that the RSS also had a perspective The only thing we know is that they had decided to keep themselves out and were laying more and more stress on the non-political character of the organisation and broadly complied with the various restrictive orders issued by the British government When asked not to use uniforms similar to the military uniform they changed their wear, the khaki shirt was replaced

*Nehru, Jawaharlal, *Discovery of Ind a* pp 595 99

by white shirt, canvas shoes came in place of leather boots anc the broad belt was altogether abandoned Their thinking anc behaviour was hardly distinguished from that of the Hindu Mahasabha and, if the religious denomination be ignored, of the Muslim League

Whatever the attitude of the leadership, the youth whc came into the RSS did occasionally feel restive, maybe becaus of the general atmosphere of struggle prevailing in the country They were told . 'We have to bide our time The opportunity will come We should conserve our strength for that time Catharsis of youthful militancy was brought about by fiery tone of speeches and occasional clashes with the Muslims Thus th anti British sentiment was being channelled into anti Muslin action So far as national struggle is concerned the RSS wa not seen even on the sidelines There were but only som stray arrests here and there because of a swayamsewak' enthusiasm or because of a local official's mistake, as soon a it was known that a person belonged to the RSS he was imme diately released

The Bombay weekly, *Blitz*, published a long report* show ing that Atal Bihari Vajpayee (or Bajpai) "had betrayed hi revolutionary colleagues in the 1942 freedom struggle by dis closing their names to the police and apologised his way out o jail" The report gives details of the whole case and the cour proceedings of the time It also refers to an article of Atal' brother, Prem Bihari Lal Bajpai, published in *Sandesh*, th official organ of the Madhya Pradesh government, date May 12, 1973 in which he had admitted the arrest of bot himself and his brother Atal in connection with the Bateswa case He also revealed that, on the intervention of Sir Girij Shankar Bajpai, then member of the Viceroy's Council, bot of them were released

It must also be recorded that the *Blitz* was sued in courts c law by Nanaji Deshmukh and some other RSS men but th case was dismissed The man concerned, Atal Bihari Vajpaye himself did not either try to defend himself or file a case c defamation

**Blitz*, January 26, 1974

There are some reports of the Intelligence Bureau of that time which are relied upon by the RSS to prove, the sole conclusive proof, that it was doing its patriotic duty In all fairness we should have a look at them We quote from a booklet officially issued by the RSS *

"*Guruji's call* The thinking of the RSS during 1942 freedom movement can be understood from the following extracts from the then (British) India Government's Intelligence Bureau papers available with the National Archives at New Delhi

(1) *D Home Poll (Int) Sec F No 28/8/42 Poll (I)* page 20 has provided an extract from the speech of Shri M S Golwalkar (Guruji) in an RSS training camp at Poona in April/May 1942 "On 27 4 42 he (Golwalkar) denounced those persons who render every possible assistance to the present government for their own selfish ends On 28-4 42 he declared that the Sangh has resolved to do its duty even though the whole world goes against it and impressed on the volunteers that they must be ready to sacrifice their lives for the cause of the country "

On 3 5 42 he made an important speech—"It was not possible to get swaraj by begging it from foreigners and this could only be obtained by strength, it was therefore their duty to strengthen the Sangh They would not waste their energy but would reserve it and would make use of it at the proper time He said that they had nothing to do with what Japanese or the British were going to do but the question was what they should do The opportunity for which they had been waiting so long had now come and they should utilise this to their advantage "

On 5 5 42 he said that he was g'ad to see the war taking place, as the time for their liberation was fast approaching "They had to worship the goddess of war not by flowers but the sacrifice of their lives They were not afraid of offering sacrifice to the goddess " In the same training camp of the Sangh Dada Parmarth of Nagpur on 6-5 42 said that the opportunity for which they had waited so long had now come and they should

*Chittaranjan *Facts about RSS and Gandhi Murder, RSS and Freedom Movement, RSS and Cammunal Riots*, pp 10 13

consider the slogan 'Their difficulty is our opportunity' They should hope for a better future and prepare for the worst

(2) *Home Dept Pol F No 28/3/43 Poll (I)* on pages 8 9 has spelled out the objectives of the Sangh An extract from the same says that "Another speaker at Jubbalpore hinted that the aim of the Sangh was to drive the British out of India—a statement which is repeated by Gajjandhar of Nagpur at a private meeting in Amritsar on May 23rd Recently an RSS organiser exhorted an audience in the Wardha District to prepare to die for India's liberation " At Gurudakshina meeting in Jubbalpore on September 12th, Baba Sahib Apte (All India Prachar Pramukh) remarked that the behaviour of the British in India was becoming intolerable and he advised his audience to prepare to free their country

(3) E J Beveridge of the Home Department appended a note on the objectives of the RSS on 7 3 43 It is contained in their file no *(Int) F No 28/4/42 Poll (I)* On pages 31 32 has been cited the report of a letter which was intercepted by the said department in October 1942 It is as follows

"A Gwalior student member (of the RSS) to a friend gave some interesting facts about the policy of the Sangh The writer who had learnt his facts a few days previously from the Lucknow Organiser of the Sangh, stated—our late leader (Dr Hedgewar) before his death asked all the organisers of the Sangh to make members 3 per cent in cities and 1 per cent in villages They must be well trained Before we do any work we must think over it minutely He (Dr Hedgewar) before his death also declared that in 1942 there will be a good vast revolution in India, so we must be ready for it And now when we will organise our fixed and limited organisation for this end we will put our steps forward for swaraj "

It is not possible to accept the tall claims made by the RSS because the assessment of its policy and conduct given in the same report tells a different story As for the policy, Beveridge, the official who has signed the report, thought that it was 'influenced to a considerable extent by its association with the Hindu Mahasabha' and therefore felt it necessary only to bear in mind that 'any radical change in the declared policy of the Hindu Mahasabha will probably affect the policy of the Sangh'

virtually a sign board for the RSS It gave the organisation an opportunity to establish itself as the saviour of the Hindus With the government funds at their disposal the RSS was able to quickly set up an organisational network in the Panjab as well as in the Jammu and Kashmir state In the latter they got active support from the Maharaja who wanted to use them against Sheikh Abdullah The RSS responded to the friendship of the Dogra ruler on purely communal considerations and in spite of the fact that he was reluctant to accede to India When after the accession Abdullah had been installed as Prime Minister of the state, the National Conference had raised a volunteer force, the National Militia, to put up resistance to the raiders Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, the State Home Minister, sent several complaints that the RSS men intercepted the arms being sent for them from India There were suspicions that it was being done with the connivance of Sardar Patel *

These successes, though not of momentous significance, probably gave them ideas and takeover of power began to be talked in Sangh circles rather widely There were depositions before Kapoor Commission in 1969 which gave clear indications of the goings-on Some of them gave clear hint that *a coup was contemplated and preparations for it were being* made with the help of some princes ** Given below are some paragraphs of the Commission's report relating to this aspect of RSS activity

"19 59 Mr B B S Jetley witness No 55 when recalled the second time said that he made a list of 600 700 cases against the RSS in a couple of months after independence, the charge against them being of collecting arms and attacking villages and assaulting individuals, and his recommendation was that the RSS should be banned and he went and talked to the UP Premier G B Pant and the Home Minister Mr Lal Bahadur Shastri They agreed with him but they said that they would consult Sardar Patel The movement was banned but it was after Mahatma Gandhi s murder *He was called by Sardar* Patel and was told by him that it was extremely difficult to ban

*Durga Dass *Sardar Patel Correspondence* (1945 50) Vol

** See Chapter 4

the RSS because he thought that the Muslims were against them and he did not want the Hindu public also to go against them Mr Jetley added that he told Sardar Patel that something terrible may happen That was in October or November 1947 He also saw Mahatma Gandhi but he did not tell him this he only brought before him the weapons seized from the RSS but he would not look at them When he told Sardar Patel that something serious would happen, he did not mean murder of Mahatma Gandhi but it might have happened to Sardar Patel himself or to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru He then said that he did not think that Sardar Patel ever attended an RSS rally in the UP But he was not in Lucknow in May 1947 and that Sardar Patel attending any such rally before independence was quite different from doing this after he became Union Home Minister "

"19 77 Delhi Police Abstract of Intelligence, dated December 8, 1947, has given an account of an annual rally of the Delhi RSS on December 7, 1947 at Ramlila Ground where 50,000 volunteers attended The Maharaja of Alwar, Maharaja of Idar, Dr Gokul Chand Narang, Seth Jugal Kishore Birla were amongst those present On the arrival of Guruji M S Golwalkar, the Sangh flag was hoisted and there were physical exercises Golwalkar then made speech and said that the Congress government was as ignorant about the Sangh as the previous British government He eulogised Shivaji, Maharana Pratap and Raghunath Bhonsle He criticised those who had started a campaign against the RSS and described the attitude of the government as un Indian and 'Satanic'. He exhorted the volunteers to carry on the work done by the Sangh in the Panjab He compared the attitude of government towards the Sangh in disparaging terms He said that lot of Sangh volunteers perished in the disturbances in upholding the cause of Hindutva "

"19 78 · On the 8th December there was workers' meeting where 2,500 workers were present There Golwalkar exhorted the workers to enrol more volunteers and be prepared for gueril a warfare on the lines of Shivaji's tactics. He said the Sangh would finish Pakistan and if anybody stood in their way they will finish him also 'No matter, whether it should be Nehru government or any other government, India,' he said,

'was no place for them to live.' 'They', he said 'had means whereby their opponents could be immediately silenced, which is highly provocative utterance if not threat of violence.'"

The communal forces over-reached themselves in the murder of Mahatma Gandhi on January 30, 1948. They may have succeeded in stalling the efforts of Gandhi to undo the British mischief in partitioning the country but they had to pay a heavy price for it. The nation was shocked back to sanity, as if, and there was all-round expression of horror and abhorrence against the agencies which created the atmosphere in which a man like Gandhi was shot.

It was a trying time for the RSS A wave of anger swept the country Shakhas began to be attacked and there were angry mobs intent on setting fire to the offices of RSS and the houses of its members and sympathisers The demon of violence turned round against those who had released it. The government was hard put to protecting the RSS men and property. The Sangh leadership was careful enough to take steps to dissociate the organisation from Gandhi murder. Golwalkar sent a telegram to Prime Minister Nehru and Home Minister Patel expressing shock at the 'tragic loss of the greatest personality'. Normal routine of shakhas was suspended for 13 days 'out of respect and sense of sorrow at the tragic demise of Mahatmaji'.

How the government in those days viewed the activities of the RSS is unambiguously stated in the communique of February 4, 1948, declaring the RSS unlawful *

The RSS decided not to resist the ban orders and to lie low for some time The regular shakhas were disbanded but clandestine activities were carried on in the form of group meetings, group dining etc The RSS functionaries outside the prison approached eminent personalities to win sympathy for the organisation. After his release from prison on August 6, 1948, Golwalkar started correspondence with Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel to get the ban lifted His appeal was based on the assertion that the organisation was innocent and the charges against it were unfounded and mala fide The plea did not work Jawaharlal Nehru plainly wrote that he could not

*See Appendix III

neighbouring countries It is that anxiety that makes me appeal to you with earnest urgency to create the necessary atmosphere for the functioning of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh as before "*

While this correspondence was going on the RSS conducted a signature campaign on a memorandum pleading for removal of the ban People were also induced to send individual letters The campaign cannot be said to have received any popular support Only nine lakh people signed the memorandum and the number of letters too was not more An organisation Janadhikar Samiti was set up under the chairmanship of Acharya Kripalani and that too failed to click It was clear to the government that the organisation evoked no sympathy among the masses There was no pressure on the government to compel a change of policy on the RSS

Out of desperation the RSS launched satyagraha early in December 1948 About 60,000 swayamsewaks courted arrest but that, too, seemed to have no effect either on the people or on the government The organisation was going to pieces as the number of shakhas and sympathisers began to dwindle at an alarmingly fast rate Within a month or so it was felt that *the agitation was petering out In this situation* G V Ketkar,** T R V Sastry,*** and B G Khapade**** came forward to rescue the Sangh through mediation On their advice Golwalkar called a halt to the agitation on January 14, 1949 Negotiations continued for about seven months and ultimately the ban was lifted on July 12, 1949 † Golwalkar agreed to adopt a written constitution†† which could satisfy the government that the organisation would work in the open, confine itself only to the cultural fields, maintain a regular register of members and admit minor children only with the permission of their parents *or guardians*

For about a decade after 1949, the Sangh leadership busied itself with repairing the damage to the organisation The

*Ibid pp 24 25
**Editor, *Kesari*, Poona
***Leader of the Liberal Federation, Madras
****A former Minister of Central Province
†For Text of the Government Order see Appendix IV
††See Appendix V

experience of the ban had forced the realisation that the RSS could depend on no support or sympathy outside its own limited circle Hardly anybody was prepared to voice its case in Parliament or public There was great pressure within the Sangh that something be done to create political influence Already in the schools, colleges and universities the RSS had started a student organisation, the Vidyarthi Parishad Originally intended to be a substitute for the shakha it developed its own momentum and began to be looked upon as a potential alternative to the Students Federation, a pro-communist organisation The experiment had been quite encouraging but political activity was a different matter and required maturer understanding The conduct of the RSS leadership in the past few years and the vulnerability shown by the organisation during the period of the ban showed the poverty of calibre for political action An attempt was, therefore, made to cultivate that section of the Congress whose sympathies had been won in the period prior to the ban Vasantrao Oke, the smart Delhi provincial organiser, became active in that direction and according to knowledgeable Sangh circles, he had succeeded in impressing upon the anti-Nehru section of the Congress the need to cooperate with the RSS to check the leftward turn that Nehru was giving to Indian politics

The exit of Dr Mookherjee from the Cabinet and the death of Sardar Patel in December 1950 put an end to whatever hopes and possibilities there were of the RSS getting the political umbrella of the Congress Nehru was eminently succeeding as the Prime Minister of free India Despite all the difficulties coming in the wake of partition he was able to put the country on the road to ordered and democratic development The prestige of India was rising in the world and turbulance was yielding place to peaceful development within the country Nehru stood high in the esteem of the people and to combat him was no child's play In these circumstances the RSS collaborated with Dr Mookherjee in founding a new political party, the Jana Sangh Some senior and trusted swayamsewaks were deputed to take up political work under the leadership of Dr Mookherjee The Jana Sangh did not fare well in the first General Election of 1952 and, therefore, after that the RSS preferred to take a back seat.

Another major organisational projection of the period was Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh Dattopant Thengadi, who had been the RSS pracharak in Kerala, had shown some propensity for work in the trade union field He was detailed to start a pro-RSS trade union organisation, the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh. Similarly a number of other front organisations were promoted.

China's hostility to India provided an opportunity for the RSS to break its isolation Golwalkar had personally associated himself with most of the anti China agitations since early fifties It fitted very well with the new ideological dimension that he was imparting to the organisation After 1957 when China's chauvinist designs began to take shape Golwalkar found the excuse not only to give vent to his anti communist feelings but also to castigate Nehru for adopting a policy of peace towards that country

In the wake of border clashes in the 1957-59 period, mass resentment against China grew and, under that cover, the RSS came out of hibernation Anti communism alone, however, does not serve the purpose of making a place in the affections of the masses unless a better socio economic outlook is projected The alternative to that is the old familiar strategy of communalising politics And we see communal violence reappearing rather virulently in 1961 when there were some particularly vicious riots in Madhya Pradesh and UP This time it was noticed that the riots were less spontaneous and more deliberate A Congress team went to Jabbalpur, the scene of the first major holocaust after 1947, and studied the course of violence in depth A committee which worked under the chairmanship of A P Jain, a senior Congress leader of liberal views came to the conclusion that to save the society from communal outrages of such magnitude organisations like the RSS should be outlawed

No precipitate action on governmental level resulted The shocked cogitation, in the wake of the first recrudescence of communal violence, gave rise to a movement, the All India Sampradayikta Virodhi Committee, which was started by Subhadra Joshi in 1962 She had stayed in Jabbalpur (MP) for restoring peace and the violent activities of the RSS came to her notice Earlier she had worked in Delhi during the partition riots to protect the helpless Muslim population and to restore,

according to the wishes of Gandhi, a sense of confidence in them The Committee under her leadership has been working to expose the activities of the RSS Her campaign has been a major factor in creating an awareness that the RSS is a threat to democratic and secular character of India As a result of her efforts Parliament passed the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, 1972, which intends to curb communal propaganda and activities * While moving the Bill the then Minister of State for Home Affairs acknowledged the contribution of Subhadra Joshi and said "This Bill had been brought because there was a great demand for this and I would like to particularly mention in this context Shrimati Subhadra Joshi who was not a little responsible in bringing forward this Bill as early as possible that we did She was deeply devoted to the cause of this Bill and I think it is but fair that we all join in thanking her for the efforts she has made in making this possible and focussing the attention

*Statement of objectives and reasons attached to that bill reads Drills, exercises and other similar activities organised by communal and other divisive forces cause apprehension, fear or a sense of insecurity amongst members of the affected communities and also affect prejudicially the maintenance of public tranquillity Propaganda imputing that the members of any particular community cannot be patriotic or asserting that members of any particular community should be denied or deprived of their rights as citizens of India and propaganda regarding the obligations of any class of persons, by reasons of their being members of any religious, racial, language or regional group or caste or community, would be prejudicial to the maintenance of communal harmony and to the integrity of the nation It is therefore considered necessary to make specific provisions in the Indian Penal Code to deal with persons engaged in such activities

2 Though action can be taken under the existing law against individuals for activities promoting enmity or prejudicial to the maintenance of harmony between different groups on grounds of religion, race place of birth, residence, language etc , there is no provision for dealing effectively with an association which has for its object such objectionable activities In order to curb the objectionable activities of such associations, which pose serious challenge to the integrity of the nation and the maintenance of harmony between different communities it is also considered necessary to enlarge the scope of the definition of "unlawful association in the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967

3 The Bill seeks to achieve the above objects

By the time Golwalkar died in July 1973, the clouds were gathering round its fortune and the organisation was in a state of demoralisation

III

OPERATOR TAKES OVER

Golwalkar's health was never very good, despite all the stories about his capacity of endurance and physical energy circulating in the flock of faithfuls The reasons for Hedgewar nominating him as his successor are shrouded in mystery What is beyond doubt is that health and physical fitness had nothing to do with it Golwalkar is not known to have ever participated in the shakha exercises or to have undergone the rigorous OTC training although he did supervise the programmes If that be an indication of the character of the RSS the impression that it has anything to do with physical health should be got rid of A man not in the pink of health as head of an organisation like the RSS is an unbelievable incongruity, according to its popular image, but that it has been so is undeniable We have the evidence of a senior RSS officer in West Bengal who reported in 1950 that he (Golwalkar) had to be "under strict and continuous care of a physician who remains by his side for twenty four hours day and night" He writes 'Sitting by him, one thinks he is suffering from some kind of infection attacking his shin bones with the result that he showed signs of developing bow legs A Calcutta doctor was known to have prescribed penicillin treatment for him Since then discussion of the subject having been a taboo in Sangh circles, no further information on this matter is now obtainable Over and above this, Golwalkar suffers from an acute insomnia and can scarcely get any sleep at night without the aid of sedative drugs "*

The reluctance in Sangh circles to admit any such report about their chief is quite understandable because near invulnerability to human ailment is a part of the legend woven around

* Pandit, Hemendra Nath *op cit*, pp 8 9
The author was a full time worker, member of the Akhil Bharat Pratinidhi Sabha and the founder-editor of the Bengali weekly organ of the RSS

whoever is the Param Poojaniya (the most revered) Sar Sangh Chalak It has now been established* that during the last few years of his life his health was extremely bad and yet he continued his tours and other chores It was kept a closely guarded secret by the top brass in order perhaps to prevent a feeling among swayamsewaks that their chief was an ordinary mortal Any public disclosure about Golwalkar s poor health was frowned upon by the RSS establishment I have had a personal experience of this I reported in the *Secular Democracy* in September 1970 the doctor s diagnosis that Golwalkar was suffering from cancer The RSS establishment dubbed it as an expression of malice on my part Later in 1973 a few months before his death Balraj Madhok, after a meeting with Golwalkar in Nagpur, gave out that his health was a matter of anxiety Promptly the editor of the *Organiser* published a report, based on 'personal interview, that Madhok's report was false and mischievous, if not malicious

All this has to be borne in mind because such behaviour is a significant indicator about the character of the RSS We have dwelt upon this at some length in the present context because it is related to the question of succession Secrecy about the health of a leader is maintained either in totalitarian regimes where the change of leadership is likely to result in total change of policy or in top establishments of religious cults where those in line of succession are likely to stage nights of long knives—or in a mafia where the declaration about the physical incapacity of the leader is feared to disrupt operations

The ill health of the chief has played a significant role in the RSS process of succession Golwalkar got the gaddi because he became a constant companion of Hedgewar from 1937 onwards, a point of time when the latter s health began to fail Deoras who was the senior most of the group reared by the founder might have felt piqued by an outsider grabbing the supreme position Rather than making an issue of it he began to strengthen his grip over the expanding organisation The levers of control had come to his hand during the life

* Numerous episodes about it are narrated by senior RSS functionaries in *Shri Guruji Samagra Darshan* a publication in several volumes, of Golwalkar s speeches and activities

time of Hedgewar itself Unlike his contemporaries of the founding days Deoras preferred to stay at the Nagpur headquarters rather than going out to the provinces Organisers (*pracharaks* in the RSS parlance) were selected and sent everywhere from Nagpur, even those belonging to other places served apprenticeship at the headquarters before taking up the responsibility Deoras, therefore, held the keys of the whole machine As a result it was always understood that he would take over after Golwalkar. Pandit described him as 'Golwalkar's first deputy' and wrote "He is believed to be the most capable man in the Sangh and is often mentioned as Golwalkar's likely successor' * The elevation of Deoras, as such, was no surprise He had virtually been the chief, at least since 1970 if not earlier The only thing that could have prevented it was the rather indifferent state of his own health He, being a diabetic, might not have been considered the best choice to head the organisation in the stormy times ahead. But could Golwalkar freely exercise his right to nominate the successor ?

The speculation is occasioned by the fears entertained by Golwalkar about the future of the RSS which find reflection in his last speech .

"Now we have to think of one thing, and it is this whether a particular man lives or not, that fact is not going to affect adversely the future of the organisation But the history of institutions in our country, modern and ancient, proves that institutions flourish for some time and carry on their work smoothly Afterwards, differences in respect of principles are n fact uncommon The differences are more between individuals *qua* individuals, than between their professed principles " What was weighing on his mind was the expulsion of Balraj Madhok from the primary membership of the Jana Sangh Madhok had been a swayamsewak of long standing and was among those who did the preliminary groundwork for setting up the political wing of the RSS He made it clear "People say that all organisations, including the Congress have disintegrated Only the Jana Sangh has preserved its unity But now some people are gloating over the fact that an old worker

* Pandit, Hemendra Nath *op cit*, p 41

of that organisation had to be expelled from it These people are now nourishing the hope that since the workers of the Jana Sangh have had associations with the RSS in the past this sort of thing in the Jana Sangh will, by and by, creep into the RSS also They are hoping that some day there will be a similar split in the RSS "

Even as there cannot be smoke without fire, the anxiety about disintegration could not be entirely imaginary or hypothetical Golwalkar talked of the Jana Sangh phenomenon invading the RSS because of the 'past' associations of the two Everyone knows that the associations are not 'past', they are very much 'present' The only thing that is not publicly known is that a large section of the RSS rank and file find itself closer to the ideological political position of Madhok than of those who served on him the expulsion order Even an important person in the top echelons, Eknath Ranade, is said to hold views similar to Madhok's Ranade's attempts to set up a missionary organisation of youth with the funds collected through the Vivekanand Memorial Society was another headache because he has not subjected himself to the discipline and control of the dominant group in the RSS There were and there are, indeed, people who considered Ranade more deserving of the highest post Certainly it was these things in Golwalkar s mind when he talked of differences 'between individuals *qua* individuals'

Even though the death of Golwalkar was not an unexpected happening it gave a stunning shock to the members of the organisation Ever since the detection of the fell disease he suffered from three years earlier the men in top echelons of the RSS have been preparing for the eventuality The question of succession had been sorted out and the insiders knew that M D Deoras would be the chief after Golwalkar, although in keeping with the tradition and character of the organisation it was kept a closely guarded secret The policies and postures of the RSS are contingent upon the personality and predilection of its chief Golwalkar had taken over the organisation at a time when its main concern was to keep the Hindu masses away from political activity which in those days was essentially anti imperialist He had therefore developed the art of giving a religio-philosophical ring to his pronouncements and

of pushing his trusted men into the administration and other political parties The former aspect of the art made RSS attractive for that section of the Hindu middle-class which seeks a sense of identity and security in the outer trappings of religion It also provided an ideal camouflage of culture for the basically political designs of the RSS both before and after independence The latter activity created pockets of sympathy in various political parties and in the government so that in spite of total disapproval at the higher ideological political level the organisation was able to find fellow travellers in almost every situation, may it be the post Gandhi murder popular revulsion or the popular anger consequent upon riots in Gujarat and Maharashtra In his last days Golwalkar made frantic efforts to soften the attitude of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi towards the RSS so that the operation infiltration (which he wanted to step up in view of the Congress developing a new orientation) could be facilitated

Deoras is a different kettle of fish He has been more of a machine operator and has been controlling the organisation ever since the days of Hedgewar It is not accidental that in his first major pronouncement on July 4 at Nagpur he based his optimism about the future of the RSS not so much on its 'Sanatan philosophy' as was the wont of his predecessor but on the 'army of workers which would be the envy of gods

The change of leadership forced on an outfit like the RSS brings in its trail many a problems, particularly for the new incumbent Not only has he to make himself acceptable to those who have been brought up in an atmosphere of blind faith in somebody else but has also to displace the predecessor in the minds and affections of the followers His position resembles that of one who marries a widow who was more than inclined to commit sati The incoming Sar Sangh chalak and his establishment were therefore constrained to adopt a strategy which would, on the one hand, bring out the weaknesses of his predecessor and, on the other, show that the new chief better represented the ethos of the organisation

The strategy came into operation immediately as the mourning rituals came to a close A personality sketch published by the RSS papers started with a sentence reportedly uttered by Golwalkar at the time of assuming charge of the

organisation in 1940 Referring to Balasaheb Deoras he was reported to have said ' If you want to see Dr Hedgewar, look at him " A founder member of RSS and Sangh chalak of Vidarbha Appaji Joshi buttressed this image building with the following 'anecdote' 'On the first monthly Shraadha day of late Dr Hedgewar, a meeting of workers from all over the country was held Shri Guruji was presiding over it and some people were being introduced When the time came to introduce Shri Balasaheb Deoras it was found that he was not in the meeting He was in the mess, busy making arrangements for a timely meal for all the assembled workers Shri Guruji said 'The real Sar Sangh chalak is in the mess I am the Sar Sangh chalak only in the name, so call him first.' "

The anecdote is obviously an image-building gimmick because *knowledgeable insiders gave another explanation of* the use of the words 'the real Sar Sangh chalak' Golwalkar and Deoras were both close to Hedgewar, Deoras being the senior swayamsewak and in effective control over the steering wheel of the organisation, the former had felt compelled to keep him in good humour Deoras had asserted himself with nonchalance of behaviour Absence from the first meeting after takeover by Golwalkar as Sar Sangh chalak cannot be explained away by innocent anxiety to supervise the kitchen, it is a breach of discipline in an outfit like the RSS

The description of Deoras as the replica of Hedgewar was more significant than as a purely image building exercise It was the announcement of a major departure of approach towards Sangh work and the ascendance of those who had earlier been unhappy with Golwalkar for making the RSS politically sterile It was said that Golwalkar had spread the organisation wide but had failed to make it politically effective as Hedgewar would have liked it to be Deoras himself is said to belong to this category of critics Immediately after independence when a debate had raged within the RSS over the organisation taking a direct hand in politics he was on the side of Vasant Krishna Oke and other strong advocates of the political line When the latter was indicted by Golwalkar for having developed 'ambition unworthy of a swayamsewak' and pushed out of the RSS, Deoras also had retired from active

organisational work Significantly Oke has found an important place among the top men of Deoras establishment

An interview with Deoras by the Bombay correspondent of the *Organiser* also falls into this pattern A question had been sharply put "*... it is surprising that in spite of having such* an organised force of young men at its disposal the Sangh did not make any attempt to risist partition Had not the higher circles in the Sangh given any thought to how partition could be stopped ? Did senior Sangh workers like you prepare any plan to resist partition ?" In reply to this Deoras said "*It must be frankly admitted that senior workers of the Sangh had not given thought to the possible undesirable effects of partition on the future of the country Nor had the Sangh prepared any plan to stop it We were taken by surprise We may even say that we fell short in comprehensive thinking*"

The reply has extraordinary significance in the sense that it contains an indictment of the leadership at the time of partition It cannot be mistaken for self criticism because Deoras did not, at that time, hold the reins of the RSS At another place in the same interview Deoras hinted at the disillusionment about RSS programmes "It must certainly be admitted", says he, "that the younger class (precise use of language not being a part of RSS discipline one should not mind the RSS chief using the word 'class' for 'section') is not as much attracted towards the programme of the Sangh as the older generation and we are also thinking about changing *them in order to attract young people in* larger and larger number" It clearly implies that Golwalkar was unable to bring the organisation in tune with the needs of changing circumstances

Deoras started taking steps to make the organisation capable of political action The old hierarchical structure was brought in line with the electoral constituency divisions Each RSS district would cover one or two parliamentary constituencies Below that came the Assembly and Municipal constituency divisions These echelons were made responsible for providing the election machinery from time to time The shakhas are now expected to be the basic centre not only for elections to legislatures but also for managing elections of various trade unions, student unions and other socio cultural

organisations working within their respective areas The first manifestation of the new orientation was seen in the Delhi University Students Union and Teachers Union elections in 1973 itself when shakha pramukhs in various areas conducted vigorous man to man contact campaign to secure votes for the RSS nominees,

The division of work between the RSS and its front organisations henceforth would be that the latter would concentrate on propaganda while the ground organisation will be controlled and manned by the RSS Naturally enough in the selection of cadidates and office bearers the RSS will have a much more direct say than it hitherto had The changes also correspond to a strong feeling among the RSS wholetimers that some people are enjoying the fruits of political power at the cost of their work Several of the RSS wholetimers had expressed a sense of disappointment and frustration that despite having put in years of hard work they were unable to do anything for themselves while some of their colleagues had gained both prominence and prosperity by entry into politics

Another major trouble that had come up before the RSS leadership during the previous few years was with regard tc unmarried wholetime workers There have been several instances of these people conducting themselves in a mannei that brought no credit to the organisation which lays so much stress on personal character and behaviour In some case the pracharaks staying with prominent citizens in variou states and districts had developed uncalled for intimacy witl members of those families and that had caused great harm tc the organisation and its reputation It was possible to suppres the news about these mishaps but it was not possible to sto such happenings altogether According to insiders such inci dents had caused a lot of worry to the previous Sar Sangh chalak as well The new chief, recognising the risks involve in long years of celibacy, started the practice that unmarrie whole time workers or pracharaks should be put to work fo a period of two years only He also encouraged married me taking up full time work This new system naturally create problems of more finance because the allowance for suc workers had to be much more than required for unmarric

young men. To tackle this problem he prepared an elaborate plan to secure control over educational and other institutions where the full-time workers could be given employment without any cost to the RSS as such.

The system of fund collection was also changed In the past there used to be collection through *guru dakshina* once in a year where each swayamsewak made his offering without anybody knowing it. Now a system has been introduced whereby the head of a shakha would come to know what contribution has been made by whom. One effect of this is that the collection in areas where Jana Sangh is in power is more than in other areas For instance, the six-monthly collection in Delhi in 1974 was Rs 4 lakhs while in Panjab it was Rs 2 lakhs. Delhi municipal corporation was under Jana Sangh control

While toning up the organisation Deoras must have been conscious of the challenges and opportunities inherent in the country's situation In the preceding one decade the communal character of the RSS had got thoroughly exposed with scores of pamphlets brought out by the Sampradayikta Virodhi Committee which for the first time removed the veil from its thinking and practice. Important leaders of all the parties had taken up the refrain of demanding ban on its activities The attitude of the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, contributed a good deal to creating this atmosphere After the Congress split in 1969 she always referred to the role of the RSS in connection with communal riots The All India Congress Committee had passed a resolution in June 1970 saying that "organisations like the RSS and Jamaat-e-Islami have no place in our secular, democratic polity" and recommending that the government should curb their activities. Other parties were also adopting similar stand on the question and the RSS was facing the worst kind of isolation The national press which had for long years after the murder of Gandhi preferred to maintain silence about the RSS started analysing its character and exposing it as a 'para-military', 'fascist' and communal organisation out to take the country backward towards the cowdung age.

Golwalkar's efforts to meet Indira Gandhi and propitiate her through flattery had produced no effect The leaders of

its political arm, the Jana Sangh, had paid fulsome tributes to the wisdom and sagacity of the then Prime Minister in handling the Bangladesh crisis but drew a blank in terms of response The demand for declaring the RSS illegal was rising to a crescendo and the ban appeared on the horizon as a distinct possibility Late in 1973 and in early 1974 reports were circulating in the capital that the measure was under active consideration of the Home Ministry The appearance of the Home Minister and the Prime Minister at the Sixth National Conference of the Sampradayikta Virodhi Committee, which had all these years been spearheading the campaign for ban on communal organisations like the RSS and Jamaat e-Islami, further stengthened the fears in RSS circles The Prime Minister gave indication of her mind when she said that the government had been weighing the pros and cons of the question far too long, that it was high time to clinch it The effect of all this on the RSS was tremendously demoralising and the attendance in daily shakhas began to fall sharply There were fears that the RSS may crack under the pressure and may lose the battle even before a shot was fired

The possibility of finding a *modus vivendi* with Indira Gandhi having disappeared the RSS was left with no option but to give up its old style of working away from the scene of political contention It had to take up cudgels against the ruling party Besides, the policy of the government under Indira Gandhi was becoming more and more leftist, what with nationalisation of banks, abolition of privy purses, take-over of coal mines and of wholesale trade in food grains In foreign affairs too long leftward strides had been taken Not only was cooperation with socialist countries in the field of economy and defence increasing at a rapid pace but a long-term Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation had been signed with USSR in 1971, in 1973 Leonid Brezhnev had paid a visit to India in the midst of euphoric tumultuous scenes of welcome and friendship The tilt in pragmatism at home and non align ment abroad was too uncomfortable to be quietly borne Whether Deoras recalled Curran's thesis about the role of the RSS or not, the course of action he adopted reminds one of the US officer's words which, being so strikingly pertinent, bear repetition "If leftist forces in India should acquire increasing

importance or if communist imperialism should present a greater threat to India's sovereignty than the Congress government could withstand, the RSS might stand to gain Its extreme Hindu nationalism might easily become the rallying point for anti Marxists "

The country was standing at the cross roads The euphoria over the Bangladesh victory had abated and the economic problems had come to the fore Negotiations had been started with Bhutto for the return of territories and prisoners of war and the first strains in the relations with Bangladesh had started appearing—developments welcome to the chauvinist hearts as a much needed opportunity, they had been forced to nosedive when Pakistan broke up giving a hard knock to the theory of religion based nationalism The rise in oil prices in the wake of the 1973 war cast its shadow on India too The price situation was further aggravated by the failure of the monsoon and the growing unrest in the industrial sector leading to strikes and lock-outs With prices rising and production falling there was a severe strain on the common man

That was the opportunity for Deoras and his men Quite expectedly, he gave out instructions to utilise the mass discontent for discrediting the adversary Indira Gandhi and to win the sympathy of the masses The new mood found expression in the resolutions and speeches at the Kanpur session of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh The furies of the RSS front organisations were let loose The Vidyrathi Parishad joined the Nav Nirman movement in Gujarat which brought down the Chimanbhai Patel government And the role of the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh in aggravating the conflict between the government and railwaymen was of no mean order

To talk of youth power as the instrument of social change became the refrain of the opposition politicians whose frustration was touching new depths because of the skilful manipulation of politics by Indira Gandhi She was getting away with everything from Maruti car to court judgements, playing ducks and drakes with the system The estrangement between Indira Gandhi and Jaya Prakash Narayan which started around 1969 had also reached the point of no return JP was spoiling for a fight but did not have the necessary wherewithal in terms of men The socialists, his old comrades,

were not strong enough and the communists could not entirely agree with the social perspective he was projecting That provided the opportunity to the RSS and Nanaji Deshmukh pitched his tent in JP's parlour. There were people around JP who were not altogether happy with the RSS but Nanaji dispelled all apprehensions with bold and uninhibited assurances on all scores The RSS, he was told, would learn from mass struggle, an opportunity it was availing for the first time in its history and its communal character would undergo a change 'Why not give them a chance ?' thought JP and, in his abounding generosity, went to the extent of retracting all the opinions he had been expressing since 1948 when, after Gandhi's murder, he had demanded a ban on the RSS and had castigated Sardar Patel for being soft to the Sangh In a syndicated article JP wrote that his earlier assessment of the Sardar was unfair and, to the mighty joy of the RSS, he told the Jana Sangh session in Delhi . "If you are fascists, I too am a fascist "

No achievement of the RSS career has been greater and more significant JP who had been known for a keen awareness of social processes got converted to the RSS thesis that all the evils afflicting the nation resulted from the crisis of character at the top He had travelled a long distance from Marxism to the RSS via democratic socialism and Sarvodaya Nanaji had acquired him for Deoras Of course, he realised later that once again his hatred of Indira Gandhi's pro-communist posture had taken the better of his reason By the time the realisation started dawning on his tired thinking apparatus it was too late

In this context the first public address of Deoras in Delhi (1974) is worthy of note It was remarkable in many ways Unlike his predecessor he did not go into the religio-cultural rigmarole and came straight to the politico-economic scene of the country after the first few formal preliminary remarks He talked of price rise and corruption quoting the phrases most favourite with the people in power—'hard days ahead, critical days ahead' Taking note of the various explanations—world situation, expenditure on war, failure of monsoon etc —he said, ' This sort of thinking is wrong After all the challenge of the situation has to be accepted if the country has to go

ahead. We all must understand that nations make progress in spite of the adversity of circumstances It is no use giving explanation '

From this he went on to deal with complaints against the trading class and bureaucracy On both counts he held the ruling party guilty because it extorted donations from the traders and used bureaucrats for their personal and partisan purposes He also picked up the current criticism that Indira Gandhi was rendering people of her party 'cringing and craven' And he presented the conclusion that the change in situation could be brought about only by people's power So, it was an invocation of people's power, *lok shakti*, without any social analysis Echoes of fascist damagogy ! He was refreshingly candid and uninhibited in his criticism not hesitating to name the persons in his mind It was in striking contrast from Golwalkar who never mentioned any names even when using the severest expression of disparagement

Later on Deoras likened JP to the rishis and munis of yore who used to leave the peace and calm of the Himalayan retreats to save the people from calamities of misrule The RSS went whole hog into the movement which culminated in the imposition of the emergency on June 25, 1975

The role of the RSS during the emergency has been a matter of great controversy, the RSS claiming to be the real David against the Emergency Goliath while many of their jail companions call them men of straw The RSS men had an advantage over their colleagues in the JP movement as they had contacts at many levels of the administration and their RSS shakhas working outside India which had developed 'useful' contacts On account of this the RSS people got information about the decision to impose the emergency and consequent arrests well in time and went underground The branches abroad immediately took up the campaign against the emergency regime and its atrocities The RSS network came handy even for the work of running Sangharsh Samitis

However the RSS men did not turn out to be all that heroic and steadfast, the claims to undaunted spirit of sacrifice notwithstanding Only those who had the means and hoped to gain from struggle remained active and, of course, the full-time pracharaks Outside India there was plenty of

shelter and still more money from all kinds of sources, both Indian and non Indian The period of emergeney was therefore utilised for building an organisation, Friends of India Society International—another front organisation combining the roles of the Bharatiya Swayamsewak Sangh* and Vishwa Hindu Parishad With such vast organisational network and availability of resources if they were not able to make things hot for the regime it only means that the organisation is not trained to any kind of revolutionary or radical activity The men of whom the RSS is proud were the most disappointing Quite a few scurried around to buy protection from possible arrest and a remarkably large number gave in writing declaring dissociation from the RSS and the Jana Sangh If such is the human character that half a century of culturisation has produced, is it something to be proud of?

The swayamsewaks were able to accomplish only one thing with skill and that was to infiltrate into Sanjay's Youth Congress Even Indira Gandhi has now admitted that there was large scale infiltration of RSS men in the Youth Congress ranks Apart from the question who should share the blame for it, it has also to be considered whether the RSS boys had taken to that course as a stratagem to sabotage the regime or as an alternative to the RSS for being on the right side of authority Also, would they have succeeded if Sanjay himself were not keen to take over the RSS boys into his own outfit with which he sought to replace the Congress There are reasons to believe that even the RSS leaders were of the opinion that Sanjay, with his confirmed enmity towards communists and opposition to measures like nationalisation, wa nearer to their own ideology and politics Didn't he say tha he had learnt politics from Shraddhanand of *Shuddhi* fame Didn t Indira Gandhi go to Haldi ghati and praise Ran Pratap in the RSS style under his influence? Didn't Sanja issue instructions that Muslims and Harijans should be speci target for forced sterilisation and, if they created trouble, the should be taught a lesson? Didn't he clear the pavements that shopkeepers could carry on their business unhindered b pavement hawkers? Didn't he throw out the shanty-dwelle and squatters outside the city limits and accomplish efficient

*The name of the RSS outside Ind a

what the Jana Sangh administration wanted to do in 1967 but could not ? What the RSS wanted to do he was doing better Thus went the justification And there were regular contacts of authorised RSS representatives with authorised representatives of Indira Gandhi Why, after all, had Saklecha of Madhya Pradesh been kept on parole for 19 months if not to act as a go between for negotiations ?

The behaviour of those who had been imprisoned was no better According to Madhu Limaye, who was in Raipur jail, never before had there been such a melancholy spectacle of chicken heartedness, so many political prisoners cringing to secure release A graphic account of their behaviour inside prisons is given by a socialist leader of Maharashtra, Baba Adhav, who was in Yervada jail where Balasaheb Deoras also had been detained Castigating Deoras and his men for indulging in self praise, he writes "Demonstration of self-eulogisation is all pervading But are the claims made by the RSS true ? Though among the detenus under MISA the number of RSS men was large, many Sanghites proclaimed that they were detained though they had no connection either with the anti emergency agitation or JP's movement

"In fact, many of them upheld the emergency rule JP has instigated the armed forces', they used to tell in their jail 'boudhik' There was in effect no opposition to Indira Sanjay politics, certainly not from their side In fact, Sanjay Gandhi's anti communist, laissez faire and authoritarian views were hailed by them

"The pro Sangh daily of Poona, *Tarun Bharat*, had made consistent efforts to hail Sanjay Gandhi Their only regret was that, instead of accepting the cooperation of the RSS to implement the 20-point programme, the organisation was banned There were severe attacks by Indira Gandhi not only on the RSS but also the educational institutions run by them Poor Sanghites were feeling restless over this, and their 'ideological doldrum was indeed pathetic "

In April 1977 Deoras had been accorded a reception in which all the Delhi MPs joined to greet him with folded hands Addressing the gathering he said "The ban and imprisonment has been regarded by the Sangh as a blessing in disguise as this sojourn (in jail) has helped in dispelling

many misgivings about the RSS which has proved beneficial to national unity of the new party. During this period the courage with which the RSS resisted the insults inflicted upon it was remarkable."

Baba Adhav takes note of this and comments "It is surprising that Deoras should say that Sangh workers had not surrendered I do not know about the prisons elsewhere, but at Yervada and other jails in Maharashtra I know what happened There used to be several meetings, debates and discussions Also there was a lot of correspondence The chief Deoras had good deal of correspondence* with the former Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, former Maharashtra Chief Minister Shankarrao Chavan, Vinoba Bhave and close associates of Sanjay Gandhi In a press conference at Delhi he confessed about the two letters sent to Indira Gandhi Journalists might have seen the copies of those letters. Balasaheb has sent one letter to Indira Gandhi on her birthday and another congratulating her on her exoneration by the Supreme Court

"For felicitating her on birthday one should not berate Deoras, but what about the sin of congratulating her for arbitrarily amending the Constitution and 'managing success at the Supreme Court'? Throughout the period of his detention Deoras was desperate to have a dialogue and an interview with Indira Gandhi As far as I know, he contacted many people including the then Chief Minister of Maharashtra for this

"In February 1976, Indira Gandhi visited Bombay and in order to meet her, he got himself moved to St George Hospital (Bombay), pretending illness Through Shankarrao Chavan an effort was made to see her, failing which a meeting with Shankarrao Chavan was sought by one Jana Sangh MLA outside the jail However, if these efforts were not successful, it was not for want of will To convince Shankarrao Chavan, he was approached repeatedly

"That signing an undertaking was a part of this effort is known to all the prisoners in Yervada jail The following pro forma of the written undertaking signed by these 'freedom fighters' brings into sharp relief their cowardice

* See Appendix VI

PRO FORMA OF UNDERTAKING

Shri Detenu Class I . . prison agrees on affidavit that in case of my release, I shall not do anything which is detrimental to internal security and public peace Similarly, I shall not do anything which would hamper the distribution of essential goods So also I shall not participate in any illegal activities I shall not indulge in any activities which is prejudicial to the present emergency

"The Maharashtra government had demanded written undertaking for conditional release of the detenus The RSS and Sangh detenus had independently decided to sign such undertakings This caused a stir in the jail and the socialist leaders like Bagaitkar, Babu Rao Samant and Dasrath Patil went to meet the Jana Sangh Mhalgi to dissuade his party people from signing this undertaking *Mr Mhalgi pleaded that the decision to sign the undertaking was taken by the top leaders of the RSS and Jana Sangh not confined to jail* The pro forma of this undertaking was agreed upon by those outsiders after conferring with the CM (the irony is that even among those who had signed the undertaking very few were released) By contrast freedom fighters like Shribhau Limaye and Dasrath Patil unequivocally refused to sign Moreover, in their letter they rebuked the then CM that it was an insult to demand such an undertaking from freedom fighters

' The directive of the 'struggle committee outside jails was that the RSS and Jana Sangh people should not sign such an undertaking This was conveyed to them by S M Joshi However, the directive was ignored Ultimately, the letter of JP was sent in At Nasik jail the socialists decided that this undertaking should not be given There was division between the RSS and Jana Sangh on the one hand and the socialists on the other *A senior leader of the RSS, Baba Bhide, used to address boudhik in which he always supported the emergency and emphasised that he had nothing to do with the anti-emergency struggle Balasaheb Deoras himself said that 'had the government not banned the RSS, its volunteers would not*

have gone to jail in such large numbers by resorting to satyagraha'

"During this period there were several moves at Delhi level. It is quite likely that appeals were made to Indira Gandhi and Sanjay to intervene. Indeed, Deoras has admitted to have done so through Vinoba Bhave Going a step further they convened a meeting in Kashmir in which they even decided to make a change in the organisation *modus operandi* of the RSS Instead of Sar - Sangh - chalak (the chief), a President was to be elected and admission to non-Hindus was decided upon and conveyed to Sanjay Gandhi In this connection a Jana Sangh leader of Delhi, Hans Raj Gupta, is mentioned The information on what exactly transpired between the two is buried in silence

"The reason for writing at such length about the RSS is that Deoras is masquerading that the RSS alone was the front-rank fighter in the anti-emergency struggle The issue of undertaking was consigned to oblivion To make their task easier, the government brought forward a 'memorandum'. This was no different from securing conditional release

> Sir,
>
> Your case for detention has been reviewed by this government and it has been decided that the detention should be revoked subject to the condition that, you shall not participate in activities prejudicial to the present emergency and subject to good behaviour You are requested to please note it
>
> Yours faithfully,
> Sd/-
> Section Officer Home Dept.
> Govt of Maharashtra

"Many detenus opted for this recourse Some of the RSS people took a legal stance and argued what was wrong in giving such an undertaking Later, the ailing, the crippled, and the aged and those who have decided to withdraw from public life were allowed to opt for conditional release Even this decision was taken independently of the RSS-Jana Sangh group Even though it is unpleasant history it has to be made

public for exposing the tall claims of the RSS "* So the clay feet of the RSS heroes could not remain behind the curtain !

The results of the 1977 election came for the RSS as a windfall—a gift of Indira Sanjay politics The threat having receded and the power well in hand, the RSS launched upon a new course to reach the goal of absolute power An all-India tour of the chief was organised to create an impact of awe and wonder and he went about like a conquering Caesar. There couldn't be a better opportunity to make a public debut I can't resist the temptation of quoting Baba Adhav again, so true is his description of the RSS antics in the days immediately following the victory of the Janata Party .

"Now that the emergency has been lifted, MISA detenus released, the Congress defeated—in short the 'threat' was over—the pronouncements of the RSS Chief started being published On March 21, 1977 in the victory rally of the Janata Party the RSS chief was accorded welcome Since then he has been touring every nook and corner of the country like the legendary Ashvamedha horse conquering the entire landscape The description of these great conquests is reaching the people through the Press AIR, and TV In publicity he has surpassed even Sanjay Gandhi The only difference is that at that time there was censorship The chief has been accorded special welcome *artis* by hundreds of married women, gun salutes, at some places he was garlanded, regal style, by elephants And all this pomp and show were stage managed to appear spontaneous

' Wherever he goes, receptions are arranged, grand processions are organised, flags, festoons and special decorative arches are put on the route, followed by public receptions and press conferences The colourful features of the programme have been published daily Special supplements eulogising him have been published Of late, erstwhile critics have started showering praise on him With the RSS deriving moral strength from this, shakhas resumed functioning with characteristic zeal From the chief down to the ordinary worker, everyone is speaking in a language of 'JITAM-MAYA' (I conquered) In the public meeting at Ramlila Grounds at

* Baba Adhav, *Secular Democracy*, Independence Number, (Aug 1977),

Delhi the chief said 'JP and RSS stood solidly in the struggle of Democracy versus Dictatorship' *

And yet, the RSS was not free from fear The RSS chief tried to clear his way to Indira Gandhi by declaring that no action should be taken against her and her son and that the government should act in a spirit of 'forget and forgive They also sought to develop a new political mask, the Jana Sangh having become worn out and thin The word, therefore, went down that total merger of all the constituents of the Janata Party should be immediately brought about The swayamsewaks who had come to the Parliament made a big show of self abnegation and self sacrifice to persuade others to give up their inhibitions about the RSS "We have burnt our boats and will not look back', Atal Bihari used to declare with his characteristic flourish

With the merger accomplished and the initial hurdles crossed they started another phase of operation Playing one group leader against the other they tried to corner maximum benefits in terms of key appointments At the centre they accepted less than their proportional share of ministerships but, by a process of shifting alliances, they secured dominant position in six of the eight states ruled by the Janata Party combination, with chief ministerships in three—Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh—plus the headship of Delhi Metropolitan Council Besides, they had their eye on the organisation Nanaji had already planted himself rather strongly by refusing a ministership The idea was to enrol a large number of members through RSS shakhas and capture the party through the legitimate democratic process

Neither the leadership nor the men of the RSS were, however, able to contain their joy and hold the heady wine of power Talk of totally dominating national politics in ten years became frequent and open A separate call for controlling the MPs and centrally directing the political moves was created with headquarters at the New Delhi residence of Sunder Singh Bhandari Consisting of Bhandari Nanaji, Advani, Vajpayee and J P Mathur, it began to function under

**Ibid*, pp 39-40

Chapter 4

The Bitter Fruit

Life was a hiding place that played me false
I crouched unashamed, and still was seen and scorned
But now I am not seen

—LASCELLES ABERCROMBIE

MURDER OF THE GREATEST HINDU

"On 30th January, while Bapu was on his way to the prayer meeting three shots were fired at him from a revolver Bapu fell and died soon after Nathuram Godse was the man responsible for the murder He had been a worker of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh in Poona and also the editor of a paper"*, wrote Morarji Desai in his autobiography published in 1974

The name of the RSS has been associated with the murder of Gandhi ever since the ghastly deed was done, the vehement protestations of the RSS to the contrary notwithstanding The charge has stuck in spite of the fact that the RSS chief, who had been arrested and put in the dock along with the other accused, had been cleared of the charge at an early stage of the trial

According to the protagonists of the RSS it is the result of 'a communist conspiracy' to defame and demoralise 'a nationalist organisation', a political gimmick employed by those who are afraid of its growing popularity and influence Even if that were true it could be said that they are getting a taste of their own medicine in the sense that their chief weapon in public

*Desai, Morarji, *Story of My Life* p 248

controversies and political battles is character assassination They would attribute the worst kind of criminal motives to a person who dares to differ from them or criticise their theories and practices

I recall an incident of 1946 In a newspaper a photograph of Jawaharlal Nehru had appeared which showed somebody lighting his cigarette That photograph was cut out and kept by a number of Sangh workers in that area of Hoshiarpur (where I was also a minor functionary of the RSS) to be shown to simple minded, credulous small town folk as an evidence of the personal degradation of the man It was presented as a kind of obscenity While showing that to people the RSS men would comment "Look, if this man is not ashamed of being photographed with a cigarette between his lips what would he not be doing in private? ' One has only to imagine the reaction, particularly of the middle class (the petit bourgeoisie as they are called) in the social milieu of a mofussil town Other photographs in this repertoire were those of Nehru shaking hands with Lady Mountbatten and his sister Vijayalaxmi Pandit *wearing* a *sleeveless* blouse and sitting, bare headed, around a table in all male company of Indians and foreigners

This incident is only the tip of the iceberg that is their arsenal of character assassination, the morbid details which they give are such that no civilised person would like to repeat For obvious reasons these things do not appear in the press, except as innuendoes and insinuations and that too *only in the house* journals of the RSS like the *Organiser* But that is heard every day in the streets so that the uncommitted and the uninitiated *feel* exasperated and, on hearing such charges, only say 'Damn it, don t they say all kinds of things about *other people* This atmosphere, in a way, helps the RSS because the contention becomes pro - and anti - and nobody bothers about going *into the facts of the* case and understand the validity of the charge or the lack of it

The loss of Gandhi to India at a crucial *juncture of India* history should not, and cannot, be *treated* so lightly On th understanding of the phenomenon depends quite a lot of th future of at least this part of the world because the develop ments of India Pakistan relations and Hindu Muslim relation would certainly have been significantly different but for th

removal of Gandhi from the scene The destruction of what Mountbatten described as 'one man peace keeping force' is not something to be treated as a mere charge going round in a political maelstrom

In his broadcast to the nation after the murder on January 30, 1948 Jawaharlal Nehru said "A mad man has put an end to his life, for I can only call him mad who did it, and yet there has been enough poison spread in this country during the past years and months, and this poison has had an effect on people's minds We must face this poison, and we must face all the perils that encompass us, and face them not madly or badly but rather in the way that our beloved teacher taught us to face them"* Later in a meeting in Ramlila Grounds Delhi, he again pointed out "What we have to see is how and why even one man among 400 millions could cause this terrible wound on our country How an atmosphere was created in which people like him could act in that manner and yet dare to call themselves Indians"**

Facing the poison and getting rid of it implies spotting its source and treating it Jawaharlal had traced the source to the RSS In a letter to Sardar Patel on February 26 1948 he wrote "More and more I have come to the conclusion that Bapu's murder was not an isolated business but part of a much wider campaign organised chiefly by the RSS"***

If the conclusion or diagnosis of the ailment, whatever you call it, arrived at by Jawaharlal is unfounded the sooner it is rejected the better because then only would it be possible to look for the source of poison elsewhere and deal with it adequately And if one goes through the newspapers of the period one finds that he was not alone to have come to that conclusion, Ram Manohar Lohia, J P Narayan and several other people concurred with him and, in fact, criticised the then Home Minister for showing leniency towards the RSS We know that several of these gentlemen in later years thought it fit to act in alliance with the RSS and tended to curb their *earlier anti - RSS ferocity* But that can be clearly seen as more

*Nehru Jawaharlal *Independence and After (1946 49)* p 17
***The Hindustan Times* February 3 1948
***Durga Das (ed) *Sardar Patel's Correspondence (1945 50)* Vol 6, p 55

a concession to political expediency than concern for truth The case of Morarji Desai in this regard is very pertinent

We have quoted his firm opinion in this matter, particularly the relationship between the RSS and the assassin, as expressed in his autobiography This quotation used to be read out by a guide at the New Delhi Gandhi Smriti—P N Damodaran Nayar by name It was a part of the narration of the story of martyrdom and no objections had ever been raised till the coming of Janata Party to power On October 8, 1977 when Morarji the Prime Minister, accompanied by his colleague Sikandar Bakht, the Minister of Housing paid a visit to the Gandhi Smriti this part of the guide's narration was brought to his notice, apparently by some RSS members and sympathisers, as something objectionable ' The Prime Minister s spontaneous reaction ', reports the guide who was a witness to it, "was that these were facts of history and that nobody can change history * Thereafter the guide was beaten up by some Vidyarthi Parishad boys and was unceremoniously dismissed by the management under the control and influence of the Housing Ministry When this question was raised in Parliament Morarji declared on the floor of the House that he no longer held the opinion which he had expressed in his autobiography The reason for this somersault on the part of the octogenarian Prime Minister is too obvious to bear repetition It however provides a glaring instance of the defence of the RSS being motivated by considerations of political expediency

And yet objectivity demands that we have full look at the case of the RSS We quote in full, including the emphasis on points, what has been issued for public by the publication department of the RSS, Suruchi Sahitya

RSS AND GANDHI MURDER

' In a number of speeches during the emergency and earlier, Smt Indira Gandhi condemned *RSS elements as the assassins of* Mahatma Gandhi We are really amazed to read it This is very grave and heinous charge and no responsible person is expected to make it, for it is totally false in view of the following facts

*Nayar P N Damodaran Editor s Note to Curran, *op cit*, p xiii.

"*In the first place, it is noteworthy that in his letter to Sri* Jawaharlal Nehru (dated 27th February 1948) Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the then Home Minister, Government of India, wrote

"*Sardar Patel's Testimony* "I have kept myself almost in daily touch with the progress of the investigations regarding Bapu's assassination case I devoted a large part of my evening to discussing with Sanjivi the day's progress and giving instructions to him on any points that arise All the main accused have given long and detailed statements of their activities In one case, the statement extends to ninety typed pages From their statements it is quite clear that no part of the conspiracy took place in Delhi The centres of activities were Poona, Bombay. Ahmednagar and Gwalior Delhi was of course the terminating point of their activity, but by no means its centre, nor do they seem to have spent more than a day or two at a time, and that only twice between 19 and 30 January *It also clearly emerges from the statements that the RSS was not involved in it at all* It was a fanatical wing of the Hindu Mahasabha—that hatched the conspiracy and saw it through It also appears that the conspiracy was limited to some ten men of whom all except two have been got hold of Every bit of these statements is being carefully checked up and verified and scrutinised and, where necessary, followed up Sanjivi devotes a considerable time every day to it Senior officers of Bombay and CP are in charge of investigation Delhi police hardly comes in the picture" (*Sarder Patel s Correspondence*, Vol 6 1945-50 edited by Durga Das)

"Thereafter the Gandhi Murder Trial commenced on June 22, 1948 in the historic Red Fort in Delhi before Shri Atmacharan, who was specially appointed for the purpose Appeal was heard by a full bench of East Punjab High Court, at Simla from May 2, 1949 Final judgement was delivered on June 21, 1949 and the guilty punished

"Many persons who are educated and old enough have followed the proceedings of the trial as they appeared in papers in those day Sri C K Daphtary, the then Advocate General, Bombay, was in charge of the prosecution The prosecution in putting its case before the learned judge did not try to involve the RSS in the conspiracy *It did not even hint, much less prove,*

even the remotest connection of the RSS with the murder of Mahatma Gandhi The RSS is not blamed anywhere in the judgement delivered in the case

"*Kapoor Commission* In November 1966, the Government of India again instituted another inquiry into Gandhi murder A commission was set up under Shri J L Kapoor, a retired judge of the Supreme Court, to make a fresh and thorough inquiry into the conspiracy to murder Mahatma Gandhi, though in a different context The commission sat at different places and examined 101 witnesses and 407 documents before it published its report in 1969 *The commission also cleared the RSS of any connection with the crime*

'One of the important witnesses was Shri R N Banerjee, I C S, (witness 19) who was the Home Secretary of the Central Government at the time of the murder The evidence of Shri R N Banerjee was

"*It has not been proved that they (the accused) were members of the RSS*"—(*Kapoor Commission Report*, Part I, p 165)

"The witness further says that even if the RSS had been banned earlier, it would not have affected the conspirators or the course of events, ' because *they (the accused) have not been proved to have been members of the RSS nor has that organisation been shown to have a hand in the murder*" (*Ibid*, p 186)

Shri R N Banerjee further stated, "Although RSS was banned it should not be taken to be an acceptance by the Government of the allegation that the murder of Mahatma Gandhi was by the members of RSS as such" (*Ibid*, Part II, p 62)

The Commission comments

"*In Delhi also there is no evidence that the RSS as such was indulging in violent activities as against Mahatma Gandhi or the top Congress leaders*" (*Ibid*, p 66)

"The facts are self evident and more eloquent than all the mispropaganda by the interested parties "

If there had ever been a simple statement that the RSS denounces and repudiates the action of Godse as also the reasons he gave for it, the charge could be cleared It would at least have been possible to believe that a change of heart had taken place after the shocking manifestation of their 'culture' But no ! The defence is based on what they think are the chinks

in the argument of the other side. And that makes the defence worse because the whole argument suffers from *suggestio falsi, suppressio veri* A tendency to politicalise the issue and take advantage of the present political atmosphere has been betrayed in picking on Indira Gandhi as the accuser. The period of emergency has also been hinted at to vitiate thinking by wrapping it in the haze of strong sentiments about the emergency days It should not however be forgotten that the charge had been made and maintained by even those whom the RSS may not find it easy to dismiss as irresponsible

Coming to the substantial part, take what they call Sardar Patel's testimony which is a letter that the Sardar had written in reply to the above mentioned letter by Jawaharlal Nehru One would like to know why they have not cared to look at another letter, in the same volume, which the Sardar had sent to Dr S P Mookherjee in reply to his entreaty in behalf of the RSS and the Mahasabha There is a very significant passage in it which reads ·

"As regards the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha, the case relating to Gandhiji's murder is sub judice and I should not like to say anything about the participation of the two organisations, but *our reports do confirm that, as a result of the activities of these two bodies, particularly the former, an atmosphere was created in the country in which such a ghastly tragedy became possible* There is no doubt in my mind that the extreme section of the Hindu Mahasabha was involved in this conspiracy *The activities of the RSS constituted a clear threat to the existence of Government and the state* Our reports show that those activities, despite the ban, have not died down Indeed, as time has marched on, the RSS circles are becoming more defiant and are indulging in their subversive activities in an increasing measure "*

The letter of February 27 written to Jawaharlal is quoted but the letter of July 18 written to Dr Mookherjee is not quoted Why ? And a subsequent one of September 11, 1948 addressed to the RSS chief Golwalkar himself is also forgotten although

*Durga Das, *op cit*, p 323.

it is part of a publication issued by the Prakashan Vibhag of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, Karnatak We quote it, both in the interest of fair argument and for correcting the distortion of Sardar's image that the enlistment as defence witness by the RSS entails Lest we be charged of misquotation or partial quotation we quote in full without making any changes —

Aurangzeb Road,
New Delhi,
Date 11th Sept 1948

Brother Sri Golwalkar,

Received your letter dated 11th August Jawaharlal has also sent me your letter of the same date

You are very well aware of my views about the RSS I have expressed those thoughts at Jaipur in December last and at Lucknow in January The people had welcomed those views I had hoped that your people also would accept them But they appear to have had no effect on RSS persons nor was there any change in their programmes There can be no doubt that the RSS did service to the Hindu Society In the areas where there was the need for help and organisation, the young men of the RSS protected women and children and strove much for their sake No person of understanding could have a word of objection regarding that But the objectionable part arose when they, burning with revenge began attacking Mussalmans Organising the Hindus and helping them is one thing but going in for revenge for its sufferings on innocent and helpless men, women and children is quite another thing

Apart from this, their opposition to the Congress, that too of such virulence, disregarding all considerations of personality, decency or decorum, created a kind of unrest among the people *All their speeches were full communal poison It was not necessary to spread poison in order to enthu e the Hindus and organise for their protection As a final result of the poison, the country had to suffer the sacr fice of the invaluable life of Gandhiji* Even an iota of the sympathy of the Government or of the people no more remained for the RSS In fact opposition grew Opposition turned more severe, *when the RSS men expressed joy and distributed sweets after Gandhiji s death* Under these

conditions it became inevitable for the Government to take action against the RSS

Since then, over six months have elapsed. *We had hoped that after this lapse of time, with full and proper consideration the RSS persons would come to the right path But from the reports that come to me, it is evident that attempts to put fresh life into their same old activities are afoot* I once again ask you to give your thought to my Jaipur and Lucknow speeches and accept the path I had indicated for the RSS I am quite certain that therein lies the good of the RSS and of the country and moving on that path we can join hands in achieving the welfare of our country Of course, you are aware that we are passing through delicate times It is the duty of every one from the highest to the lowliest in the country to contribute his mite, in whatever way possible, to the service of the country In this delicate hour there is no place for party conflicts and old quarrels I am thoroughly convinced that the RSS men can carry on their patriotic endeavour only by joining the Congress and not by keeping separate or by opposing I am glad that you have been released I hope that you will arrive at proper decision after due consideration of what I have said above With regard to the restrictions imposed upon you I am in correspondence with the CP Government I shall let you know after receiving their reply

Yours
(Sd) VALLABH BHAI PATEL
Offers Vandematram

(Rendered from the original in Hindi)*

The next argument is based upon the voluminous report of the Kapoor Commission With regard to that the first thing to be kept in mind is that the question of direct involvement of the RSS was not written in the terms of reference of the inquiry Yet because it has been referred to it is better that we

***Justice on Trial Historic Document of Guruji—Government Correspondence*, pp 26 8,

N B This letter also, incidentally, clarifies the misunderstanding created that the Sardar had invited them to join the Congress the invitation is *for rethinking* and change of heart and then giving it a concrete shape by merger into the Congress The same thing JP tried to accomplish later and failed

examine the Report For obvious reasons it has been thought fit to quote the evidence of only one witness and omit other evidence which is no less relevant For example the Commission sums up the deposition of J N Sahni as follows

"19 56 Mr J N Sahni (witness No 95) *has deposed to a secret organisation but did not directly mention it as RSS He said that it was being openly discussed in those days, i e about the time of the Birla House bomb, that there was a secret organisation with about 6 lakh volunteers which would stage a coup d etat* and the organisation had secret cells in different parts of India including the Punjab, Maharashtra, etc It was then being rumoured that its leader was Golwalkar, Bhopatkar or Dr Khare and that its volunteers were being trained in Alwar, Bharatpur and some other places with the objective of overthrowing the government after killing the top leaders and when Mahatma Gandhi was murdered it was considered to be a part of the plan and stringent measures were taken He also said that there was a secret political movement helped by some princes through their chieftains, creating a fifth column in India to take over when the British power withdrew, at least in their respective states The princes named by him were Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Alwar, Bharatpur, Baroda and Bhopal This movement was led by Golwalkar from Nagpur, and Bhopatkar from Poona, and the concentration of leadership was there "

On this the Commission comments in the next para

"19 57 *As far as the Commission is aware, Guruji Golwalkar was and is the head of the RSS movement* Mr Sahni did not ascribe these activities to the RSS but just mentioned a secret movement "

Sahni's reference to the secret movement helped by some princes through chieftains gets elaborated in the evidence of Hooja and connects it with the RSS

"19 60 Mr Hooja's reports, Ex 95, show that *at Alwar there was a training camp of RSS in May June 1947 which*

received the patronage of the Prime Minister Dr Khare and the Home Minister with the knowledge of the ruler It was also reported that both these Ministers took a prominent part in helping the RSS activities and the Prime Minister extended it the fullest patronage They received military training in the beginning of February and were put up in one of the military barracks They did firing practice with muzzle loaders and also secret training in rifle and revolver practice "

There was also the evidence of B B S Jetley, a senior Intelligence Officer, who had prepared 600 700 cases against the RSS and had told Sardar Patel that something terrible may happen' The Commission reports ' When he told Sardar Patel that something serious would happen he did not mean murder of Mahatma Gandhi but it might have happened to Sardar Patel or to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru " It surely does not absolve the RSS but indicates wider dimensions of a possible conspiracy in which the organisation was involved *

Now we come to the question involved in the assertion that although a legal luminary like C K Daphtary, the then Advocate General, was prosecuting the case in the court he 'did not even hint much less prove even the remotest connection of RSS' That dear friends, does not vouch for the innocence of the RSS and that it was not an agency which created the atmosphere in which one man dared to act the way he did He certainly was not a mad man as was the first impression of Jawaharlal Nehru immediately after the murder If it proves anything it is that those at the helm of affairs thought it fit to stick to the letter of the law The assassin had confessed to the crime and denied the charge of conspiracy at the instance of any party or person In fact he asserted "The prosecution's attempt to make out that I was a mere tool in some one else's hands is an aspersion which is far from the truth Indeed, it is a perversion of it ' **

The Advocate General had the brief to bring to book the person who had committed the crime and his associates, if any

*See *Secular Democracy*, October 1970

**Godse Gopal *May it Please Your Honour Statement of Nathuram Godse* p 39

The jurisprudence that India followed then, and does even now, does not treat a philosophy, an organisation or a group liable to punishment even when a crime of such momentous import is involved Even if it were proved that assassin Godse was a member of the RSS at that point of time it would not legally prove the culpability of the RSS *unless it could* be established that a responsible body of the organisation had formally met, taken the decision to assassinate Gandhi and duly assigned the task to Nathuram Godse It was obviously not there on record and the Advocate General would have only chased a mirage if he had taken the line of proving that Godse was only a tool in the hands of the RSS Like a good criminal lawyer and advocate he concentrated on the person of Godse and his immediate associates whose complicity and abetment was beyond reasonable doubt

Let it be clear that the brief of Daphtary was not political but personal And the handicaps in going after the RSS were too many In the first place the RSS maintains no register of membership, issues no membership cards, charges no fee against receipt and there is no way of establishing before a court of law that a certain person is a member and invariably acts according to its discipline or diktat Secondly, the RSS is not an organisation of bold revolutionaries who would declare their intentions in advance In fact that is the basic difference between revolutionary or communist violence and counter revolutionary or fascist violence of the RSS kind Those like Bhagat Singh who take to the former are not apologetic about it, they keep secrecy about an action only in order to ensure its success, the latter are ashamed of owning their deed and try to keep it a secret even after it has been accomplished One is never in doubt about the moral justification of the deed while the other is never sure of it, rather, does it as a crime

What is the truth about Godse's RSS connection? The RSS *has been at pains for years to deny that he* was ever a member of the RSS Although Curran had discovered it in 1950 51* the

*Referring to the organisational tour of Hedgewar in Maharashtra in 1932 Curran writes 'One of his advisers on this tour was Nathuram Godse who sixteen years later was to fire the pistol that killed Mahatma Gandhi Godse had joined the RSS in 1930 winning prom-

information remained buried in the files of the Institute of Pacific Relations* till it was referred to by a writer on the Jana Sangh, Craig Baxter, in 1968 Godse himself had stated before the Court "I have worked for several years in RSS and subsequently joined the Hindu Mahasabha . "** The most significant is the revelation by his brother about the last moments of his life "On reaching the platform they recited a verse of devotion to the Motherland

नमस्ते सदा वत्सले मातृभुमे त्वया हिन्दुभूमे सुखवर्धितो ऽहम् ।
महामगले पुण्य भूमे त्वदर्थे, पतित्वेप काया नमस्ते नमस्ते ॥

This is the opening verse of the RSS prayer sung in every shakha and outsiders are not acquainted with it, except for academic reasons At the time of Godse's membership of the RSS, *around 1932—as admitted in these statements—this* prayer was not sung even in the RSS As we have already indicated, in those days the Marathi Hindi prayer was in currency The Sanskrit prayer, of which this verse forms a part, was adopted only in *1940 How did Godse take* it up as a kind of epitaph on his life? The denial of connection surrounds the whole affair with an air of suspicion

Having scrutinised the arguments of the RSS we would like to assert once again that it was nobody's case that the RSS provided the pistol and the other means with which Godse murdered Gandhi Everybody, from Jawaharlal Nehru downwards, has been talking of the kind of atmosphere and the culture that induces thoughts and sentiments which lead to such a heinous act Before we proceed to analyse the attitude of the RSS towards Gandhi it may be relevant to ask whether

ence as a speaker and organiser, he left the Sangh in 1934 because Hedgewar refused to make the RSS a political organisation" (*op cit*, pp 18 19)

*The non publication of Curran s study may be altogether innocent but it is intriguing The Institute sponsored after this a study by Minoo R Masani of the firm of Tatas of the communist movement in modern India The later work was promptly published as *The Communist Party of India* in 1954 by Derek Verschoyle in association with the Institute Why?

**Godse, Gopal, *ibid*, p 46

there was grief or jubilation in the RSS circles The RSS chief had issued a formal condemnation and also declared that they would observe mourning for 13 days But what was happening in the shakhas? Gandhi's private Secretary Pyarelal writes "*A letter which Sardar Patel received after the assassination* from a young man, who according to his own statement had been gulled into joining the RSS organisation but was later disillusioned, described how members of the RSS at some places had been instructed beforehand to tune in their radio sets on the fateful Friday for the 'good news' After the news, sweets were distributed in RSS circles at several places, including Delhi When the RSS was later banned by an order of the government, the local police chief in one of the Indian states, according to the Sardar's correspondent, sent word to the organisers to close their office 'for thirteen days' as a sign of mourning, and disperse but not to disband The rot was so insidious and widespread that only the supreme sacrifice could arrest or remove it.' *

Pyarelal's book has been cited as one of the evidences by *the Kapoor Commission (paras 19 64 and 19 65) and it reads*

' '19 64 At page 687 of his book Pyarelal had said the following

" 'The RSS was a communalist, para military, Fascist organisation, controlled from Maharashtra The key positions were held almost exclusively by the Maharashtrians Their declared object was to set up Hindu Raj They had adopted the slogan, *Muslims clear out of India* At the time they were not very active, at least overtly, but it was being darkly hinted that they were only waiting for all the Hindus and Sikhs in West Pakistan to be evacuated They would then wreak full vengeance on the Indian Muslims for what Pakistan had done

" 'Gandhiji was determined not to be a living witness to such a tragedy. The Muslims were in a minority in the Indian Union Why should they feel insecure as to their future as equal citizens in the Indian Union? There was much they had to answer for and correct But it was up to the majority community to be magnanimous and to forgive and forget '

*Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi The Last Phase*, p 756

preached was that our nationality could not be called Hindu, that even our land could not be called by its traditional name Hindustan, as that would have offended the Muslim The name 'India' given by the British was accepted Taking that name, the 'new nation' was called the 'Indian Nation' And the Hindu was asked to rename himself 'Indian' "*

Thenceforward he comes to downright obscenity and abuse

"The exhortation of the leaders did not stop at that The Hindu was asked to ignore, even submit meekly to the vandalism and atrocities of the Muslims In effect, he was told 'Forget all that the Muslims have done in the past and all that they are now doing to you If your worshipping in the temple, your taking out gods in procession in the streets irritates the Muslims, then don't do it If they carry away your wives and daughters, let them Do not obstruct them That would be violence To cite an instance, in those days, a Hindu girl was abducted by a Muslim in NWFP and the problem was posed before the Central Assembly where our prominent leaders were present A Muslim Congress leader lightly brushed aside the incident saying 'After all boys are boys and girls are girls' At that insulting remark not one of the Hindu leaders present there raised a voice of protest None dared to ask why, if it was just a case of boys and girls, it always happened that the Muslim boys kidnapped only Hindu girls and not Muslim girls? On the other hand, they enjoyed it as a piece of humour!

"Whenever the Muslims slaughtered cows to insult Hindu feelings, the Hindus were told that it was the religious right of Muslims and that, being tolerant to other religions, they should not object to it Although there is not a word of sanction in Quran for cow-slaughter, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had given the Muslims a written assurance that on the advent of swaraj cow-slaughter would not be banned keeping in view their 'religious sentiments'.

"Once a notable Hindu personality of those days, in a largely attended public meeting, declared 'There is no swaraj

*Golwalkar, M S , *Burch of Thoughts*, pp 149 50

without Hindu Muslim unity and the simplest way in which this unity can be achieved is for all Hindus to become Muslims'! He did not even realise that then it would not be Hindu Muslim unity but only Muslim unity as there would be no Hindus at all!'*

The reference to Jawaharlal is clearly made but to Gandhi it is by implication, it is however unmistakable for any discerning reader And the peroration goes on so that a little further we read

' In other words, the Hindu was told that he was imbecile, that he had no spirit, no stamina to stand on his own legs and fight for the independence of his motherland and all this had to be injected into him in the form of Muslim blood What a shame, what a misfortune that our own leaders should have come forward to knock out the ancient and indomitable faith in ourselves and destroy our spirit of self confidence and self-reliance, which is the very life breath of a people! Those who declared 'No swaraj without Hindu Muslim unity' have thus perpetrated the greatest treason to our society They have committed the most heinous sin of killing the life spirit of a great and ancient people To preach impotency to a society which gave rise to a Shivaji who, in the words of the great historian Jadunath Sarkar, 'proved to the whole world that the Hindu has drunk the elixir of immortality' and to break the self confident and proud spirit of such a great and virile society has no parallel in the history of the world for sheer magnitude of its betrayal "**

And after this so called RSS view of the historical process preceding partition he makes the pronouncement "The direct result was that Hindus were defeated at the hands of Muslims in 1947 "***

These views were projected through the RSS media in the form of articles, stories, cartoons etc

*Golwalkar, M S, *Ibid* pp 150-51
**_Ibid_, pp 151 152.
***_Ibid_ p 152.

The RSS is not, according to its votaries, an active agent. In a sense it is true, the RSS never decides to do anything nor does it ever put on record any orders or instructions given to its members If a deed finds approval of the public it comes forth to claim the credit, if it is otherwise it is promptly disavowed without as much as batting an eye lid While in 1947-48 the RSS men were being fed on the diet a specimen of which is given above, the leaders were keen to convince Gandhi that they were not anti Muslim and were prepared to cooperate with his peace-keeping efforts Golwalkar met Gandhi in New Delhi and tried to convince him that all the latter (Gandhi) had heard about the RSS men killing Muslims was wrong and that their organisation was for protecting Hinduism—not for killing Muslims' Gandhi used to keep himself posted with the happenings in the city and yet as Pyarelal says, "Gandhiji, with his boundless faith in human nature and in the redemptive power of truth, felt he must give everybody a chance to make good his bona fides It was something that they did not glory in wrong doing " Gandhi asked Golwalkar and his colleagues to issue a statement repudiating the allegations and condemning the loot and violence They wanted to wriggle out by saying that it could be done on their behalf by Gandhi himself He told them if what they said was sincerely meant the public should know it from their lips They must have been convinced of the failure of their mission when during the meeting, in response to somebody's praise for the good work by the RSS at Wah refugee camp and showing discipline, courage and capacity for hard work, Gandhi remarked But don't forget even so had Hitler s Nazis and the Fascists under Mussolini ' *

Then the old Hedgewar technique was used and they invited Gandhi to an RSS rally in Bhangi colony RSS leaders prefer to say that he had himself expressed a desire to visit the shakha Whatever be the truth the fact remains that they failed to change his attitude What transpired at the rally is reported by Pyarelal thus

*Quoted by Pyarelal, *op cit*, p 440

"In welcoming Gandhiji to their rally, the leader described him as 'a great man that Hinduism has produced'. Gandhiji replying observed that while he was certainly proud of being a Hindu, his Hinduism was neither intolerant nor exclusive The beauty of Hinduism as he understood it was that it absorbed the best that was in all faiths If Hindus believed that in India there was no place for non-Hindus on equal and honourable terms and Muslims, if they wanted to live in India, must be content with an inferior status, or if the Muslims thought that in Pakistan Hindus could live only as a subject race on the the sufferance of the Muslims, it would mean an eclipse of Hinduism and an eclipse of Islam He was glad, therefore, he said, to have their assurance that their policy was not antagonism towards Islam *He warned them that if the charge against them that their organisation was behind the killing of the Muslims was correct it would come to a bad end*

"In the course of questions and answers that followed Gandhiji was asked whether Hinduism did not permit the killing of evil doers If not, how did he explain the exhortation by Lord Krishna in the second chapter of the Gita to destroy the Kauravas?

"The reply to the first question, said Gandhiji, was both 'yes' and 'no' One had to be an infallible judge as to who was the evil door before the question of killing could arise In other words one had to be completely faultless before such a right could accrue to one How could a sinner claim the right to judge or execute another sinner? As for the second question, granting that the right to punish the evil doer was recognised by the Gita, it could be exercised by the properly constituted government only Both the Sardar and Pandit Nehru will be rendered powerless if you become judge and executioner in one They are tried servants of the nation Give them a chance to serve you Do not sabotage their efforts by taking the law into your own hands"*

Gandhi was frustratingly steadfast on his principles and too shrewd to be taken in by the glib talk of RSS men They may have included Gandhi in the Pratah Smaran (their morning

*Pyarelal, *ibid*, pp 440-41

prayer) but it certainly is not because any change of attitude towards him has come about This was done in 1965 and a few years later the RSS members in the Delhi Municipal Corporation objected to a resolution referring to Gandhi as 'Father of the Nation'

If the RSS can demonstrate a change in its basic attitude the charge of Gandhi murder would get washed away Otherwise it would stick, no matter what ritualistic cosmetics they employ

Chapter 5

Nation Torn Asunder

This is the final blasphemy, the blight
On all pure purpose and divine intent—
To dress the selfish thought, the indolent,
In the priest's sable or the angel's white

—GERALD GOULD

I

THE COMMUNAL CONFLICT AND THE RSS

Mention the RSS in any group and immediately the talk would turn to communalism and communal riots. "Oh the RSS, they are criminals of the worst kind! They indulge in violence against innocent women and children in the name of religion They do violence to the name of religion and commit outrage against humanity"—some would say. Some others would protest, "Why do you accuse only the Hindus? Shouldn't they organise and retaliate when attacked?"

It is wellnigh impossible to think of, or discuss, the RSS without going into the question of its close association with the phenomenon of organised communal violence. Broadly speaking the Muslims of India have come to believe that the RSS is out to totally eliminate their community. There are a few people—like the former Housing Minister Sikandar Bakht and the former Minister of State for Commerce Arif Baig—who try to defend them but the community finds such people totally at variance with the facts of life They remain isolated individuals. The only organisation of Muslims that for some time made an attempt to whitewash the image of the RSS was the

Jamaat e Islami, perhaps because it shared the RSS opposition to communism and secularism But after what happened in Aligarh and Jamshedpur they are also constrained to change their tune A section of Hindus—a small section only—feels that the RSS is their only saviour The bulk of the community, however, either ignores them or curses them for bringing a bad name to Hindu religion and to India The reason, of course, is very simple The proportion of the Hindus in the total population is so large that they have no feelings of insecurity and, therefore have no need of a saviour, RSS or any other

Apart from the fact that popular mind associates the two together there is a remarkable coincidence that the RSS has grown the most in areas where there has been tension and violence Wide notice has also been taken of another coincidence that most of the riots were preceded by visits of RSS leaders or the holding of the RSS camp in that particular area The 1927 riot of Nagpur has already been referred to * How it was seemingly unprovoked and deliberately engineered, how it had given a big boost to the growth of the RSS and how the first ever Officers Training Camp had been held only a few months prior to that The same kind of reports were later heard from Ahmedabad, Jalgaon, Bhiwandi and Ranchi,

The Kapoor Commission, referred to in Chapter 4, had come by evidence indicating the involvement of the RSS in communal killings The report notes "By Ex 119 dated October 7, 1947 the DSP, Poona, wrote that the RSS volunteers were responsible for Hindu Muslim riots in certain rural areas of Poona District "** Further on it is recorded "Ex 62 dated December 20, 1947 is a Bombay weekly letter showing that on December 10, 1947 a private meeting of Hindu Sabhaites including some Punjabi and Sikh refugees who were ex armymen could be utilised in training RSS volunteers There could be, he said, no peace unless they had their revenge against Muslims " B B S Jetley's evidence condensed in para 15 59 says that "he made a list of 600 700 cases against the RSS in a couple of months after independence, the charges

* See Chapter 3

** See *Secular Democracy*, October 1970 p 20

against them being of collecting arms and attacking villages and assaulting individuals and his recommendation was that the RSS should be banned and he went and talked to the UP Premier Mr G B Pant and the Home Minister Mr Lal Bahadur Shastri ' *

All these were police reports and not used at the time of occurrence for any political purpose The police and bureau cracy had not yet developed the habit of accepting the Congress as the effective boss nor had most of the Congress men till then started looking upon the RSS as an adversary If at all, the evidence of the period and admitted by responsible RSS men** as correct, shows that a large majority of Hindu officers were sympathetic to the organisation The evidence, therefore cannot be dismissed as concocted by a prejudiced regime

What does the RSS say on this ? It does not deny its in volvement and role but refuses to admit either that it has ever taken initiative or incited the Hindus against the Muslims To retaliate and strike in self defence, of course, is considered to be a social duty as the protection, preservation and rejuvena tion of Hindu society is the sacred task it has taken upon itself Quite often they give the impression as if they welcome the charge because they feel elated if the Hindus look upon them as the defenders of the faith and the Muslims feel terrorised A Hindu Mahasabha functionary once made a grievance of it and told me ' Those who criticise the RSS for being anti Muslim really help them because they can then pose them selves as heroes among the Hindus " The argument of the RSS runs along the following lines 'We are not against any body We are for Hindus To organise Hindus and serve them is no sin The Muslims will come to their senses not by appeasement but by show of proven strength Hindus have never been communal and aggressive How can we be commu nal and aggressive ?' So goes on the obtuse reasoning

* *Ibid* p 21

** One of them who later became an important MP told the author that around 1946-47 most of the secret reports of the government used to reach the RSS office even before they reached the minister concerned He however prefers to remain anonymous

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** See *Secular Democracy*, October 1970 p 20

An incident which occurred during the meeting of the National *Integration Council held in June 1968 at* Srinagar is very revealing in this context Subhadra Joshi, the President of the All India Sampradayikta Virodhi Committee,* objected during her speech to the *tendency of identifying communalism* with any particular community and pointed out "A communalist is a communalist not a Hindu or a Muslim or a Sikh just as a goonda is a goonda and not a representative of a community" There is nothing objectionable in this remark, in fact every reasonable person would agree with it But Vajpayee flared up and threatened to walk out protesting that he had been called a goonda Soon enough the realisation dawned upon him that he had inadvertently admitted to the charge of being a communalist and sat down quietly Vajpayee had earlier made a statement that Hindus were not communal He would have felt comfortable if there were a retort that Hindus were communal and Muslims were not

The way the RSS presents the problem was also indicated when in May 1970, there was a debate in the Lok Sabha on the outburst of communal disturbances at Bhiwandi, Jalgaon and other places *The whole nation had felt outraged by the* happenings and almost all sections of public opinion pointed the accusing finger at the RSS and Jana Sangh Atal Bihari, *initiating the debate tried to defend his parent organisation* and the Jana Sangh and asserted 'Let us understand two things Whatever the reason, our Muslim brothers have been becoming more and more communal and as a reaction thereto Hindus have been becoming more and more militant No one has made Hindus militant *If you insist on giving us the credit for this we are willing to take it*"**

* An organisation working exclusively to expose and isolate the communal groups and organisations in public life A non official voluntary organisation the AISVC has published a number of reports on communal violence and tracts exposing the RSS Jamaat e Islami, Anand Marg Muslim League and Akali Party For the RSS this Committee is like a red rag to the bull

** *Face the Facts* (English rendering of Vajpayee s original Hindi speech made on May 19 1970 published officially by the Bharatiya Jana Sangh) p 12

If there is any ambiguity in what Vajpayee spoke in Parliament, the weekly *Organiser* removes it. In a recent issue it carried an article 'Let Mohammad Go to the Mountain' wherein the author says "The Muslim has a feeling that he has not been treated fairly in free India But the Hindu has the profound feeling that he was ill treated by the Muslim for a 'thousand years' "* In other words if the Hindu kills a Muslim or destroys Muslim property it is justifiable revenge And the author is no stray or irresponsible individual, the sign 'M' for the author is known to be invariably used by the editor who, obviously, represents the authentic voice of the organisation The solution of the problem, as suggested in the lines following is worth taking note of "It is neither possible nor profitable to go into all the rights and wrongs of history But there is such a thing as historic wrongs Chou En lai insisted on Japan saying 'sorry' for its invasion of China, before their relations could be normalised *I wish the Muslim Indians said 'sorry' by a symbolic gesture—by returning the historic mandirs forcibly made into mosques In this connection I would particularly mention the Ram Janamsthan Mandir in Ayodhya and the Krishna Janamsthan Mandir in Mathura* It could bring about a tremendous psychological change in the country' ** Comment is unnecessary

In the speeches of Atal Bihari Vajpapee referred to above it has been noticed that in his opinion Muslims alone were communal and they were responsible for provoking violence everywhere What he said may not be borne out by facts but is an authentic expression of the RSS view The founder of the RSS, for example, refrained from even using the expression 'Hindu Muslim riot', according to him they were only 'Muslim riots' ***

Golwalkar, who as Sar Sangh chalak was the most authoritative exponent of the mind of the RSS, identified the following causes of communal riots

(a) the inability or unwillingness of Muslims to identify with India, its people and culture,

* *Organiser*, June 3, 1979, p 7

** *Ibid*, p 7

*** Bhishikar, C P, *op cit* p .

could be called cultural It has, therefore, been replaced by the *Bunch of Thoughts* in which an attempt has been made to clothe the concept of nationhood in a religio-cultural garb, stray quotations from scriptures are sprinkled to give it a new flavour The attempt has not been too eminently successful because it is no better than the discourse of a pedlar of quack-medicines who also tries to quote scriptures and use literary or folk allusions to boost the sales When we come to the concept itself the old idea is repeated, nation is again identified with Hindu society :

'If we apply this definition acknowledged by all the learned men in the world to our own country, we find that this great country of ours extending in the north from the Himalayas—with all its branches spreading north, south, east and west, and with the territories included in those great branches—right up to the southern ocean inclusive of all the islands, is one great natural unit As the child of this soil, our well-evolved society has been living here for thousands of years. This society has been known, especially in modern times, as the Hindu Society. This also is a historical fact For it is the forefathers of the Hindu people who have set up standards and traditions of love and devotion for the motherland. They also prescribed various duties and rites with a view to keep aglow in the people's mind for all time to come, a living and complete picture of our motherland and devotion to it as a Divine Entity And again it is they who shed their blood in defence of the sanctity and integrity of the motherland. That all this has been done only by the Hindu people is a fact to which our history of thousands of years bears eloquent testimony. It means that only the Hindu has been living here as the child of this soil All our great personalities right from hoary ages down to modern times have, by their life and example, only confirmed the continuity of this sacred bond."*

The only improvement on *We* is that religious fervour has been accentuated and the crude demands on non-Hindus have been omitted.

* Golwalkar, M S *Bunch of Thoughts*, pp 123-24

This ideology runs counter to the Indian concept of composite nationalism which recognises that all religious communities have contributed to the development and growth of the society Enshrined in the Constitution, this concept grants equal rights to all irrespective of religious creed and provides protection to minority cultures and languages The concept given by Golwalkar does not rest content with asserting the Hindu ethos or flavour It positively excludes non Hindus After making the statement he anticipates questions What *about the Muslims and the Christians dwelling in this land?* Are they not also born and bred here? How could they become aliens just because they have changed their faith?

Before answering these questions he poses one himself What is the attitude of those people who have been converted to Islam or Christianity? His answer is "They are born in this land, no doubt But are they true to its salt? Are they grateful towards this land which has brought them up? Do they feel that they are the children of this land, its traditions and that to serve it is their great good fortune? Do they feel it a duty to serve it? *No Together with the change in their faith gone are spirit of love and devotion for the nation*"*

And then he moves a step further and calls in question the very loyalty of non Hindus and holds of them guilty of treason He adds "The story does not end here They have also developed a feeling of identification with the enemies of this land They *look to some foreign lands as their holy* places They call themselves 'Sheikhs' and 'Syeds' Sheikhs and Syeds are certain clans in Arabia How then did these people come to feel that they were their descendants? That is because they have cut off all their ancestral national moorings of this land and mentally merged themselves with the aggressors They still think that they have come here to conquer and to establish their kingdoms So we see that it is not merely a case of change of faith, but a change even in national identity What else is it if not treason, to join the camp of the enemy leaving their mother nation in the lurch"**

From this it is quite clear that unless non Hindus embrace Hinduism, they will get no rights, what to speak of respect,

* *Ibid* pp 127 28

** *Ibid* p 128

from Golwalkar and his followers That is why Golwalkar raised objection when Abdul Hamid and Keelor Brothers were honoured for their supreme patriotism and gallantry during the Indo Pak conflict *

This concept of nationalism is informed through and through with the hatred of Muslims The RSS has been hammering the idea that Pakistan was created as homeland for Muslims and every Muslim residing today in India should have migrated to the newly created state According to the Sangh all the Muslims who have opted to stay behind owe their loyalty to Pakistan and are enemies of the homeland In their opinion "wherever there is a masjid or a Muslim Mohalla the Muslims feel that it is their own independent territory", and in the words of Golwalkar they are, therefore, "so many miniature Pakistans" **

The distrust against the Muslims that the RSS people generate amongst the Hindus goes to the extent of uttering blatant lies Golwalkar reportedly declared after the Indo Pak conflict "At some places the Muslims were heard repenting why during Pakistan s attack they did not disturb the internal peace to help their Muslim brothers in Pakistan "*** The *Organiser* tried to belittle the office of the President of India just because it was held by a Muslim It reported, "All that Hindu wants is that our culture should flower forth into greatness He is scandalised that after installing one Muslim as President and another as Chief Justice, he is told that he is not giving jobs to the Muslims " In the same article it further said, "Muslims must accept the fact that India is as much a Hindu country as Pakistan is a Muslim country or Britain is a Christian country Anybody who does not accept this way of life is an ostrich today and he will be dead as dodo tomorrow "****

This anti Muslim attitude of the RSS goes to the extent of dubbing even Urdu language as a foreign language Historically, the birth place of Urdu is India and the largest number of Urdu speaking people are found in this country In an article

Swatantra Bharat Lucknow, December 21, 1965
**Golwalkar M S, *op cit* p 175
****Swatantra Bharat* December 24, 1965
*****Organiser* January 4 1970

entitled "Let not another Pak be in the name of Urdu" published in the *Organiser*, it is stated, "The import and significance of the word 'Urdu' is so derogatory to national self-respect that it suppresses all emotional upsurge in favour of the language How and why should we own a language the very name of which constantly reminds us of our political subjugation Hindu ancestors passed on Sanskrit and Hindi to their descendants They had nothing to do with the transmission of Urdu "*

This hatred is not confined to Muslims alone but extends beyond them to Jains and Christians The RSS believes that Christians do not look upon India as their homeland and the attitude of every convert to Christianity suddenly turns anti national

Surprisingly enough Jainism and Buddhism also come in for denigration "So far as Jainism and Buddhism are concerned they have never made any contribution to social and political thought as such, we have not inherited any *arthashastras* (politics and economics) or *dharmashastras* (social laws) from them All we have from them are the various *moksha shastras* pertaining to the supreme salvation of the individual soul "**

One erstwhile swayamsewak of the RSS speaks from personal experience about the anti-Muslim attitude "If the Hindu boys were involved in a quarrel or tiff of some kind, we were supposed to mediate and bring about a peaceable settlement If, on the contrary, a Hindu boy was embroiled in a dispute with a Muslim boy we were not to bother as to who was in the wrong We were straightway to side with the Hindu boy and, if it came to a physical show down, not to avoid or shrink from doing our 'mite' The Muslim was the enemy who was to be shown no quarters whatsoever The question that he could be in the right or be the aggrieved party was irrelevant, for everything was to be subsumed in the overall question of serving Mother India which meant serving the Hindus Muslims were by definition the enemies of the Hindus They were poisonous toads and would it be part of discretion to treat the offspring of the toads, however

*Organiser, February 2, 1962.
**Ibid, June 10 1963

innocuous or innocent in its appearance, as anything but toads or snakes? These young Muslim boys were like the offspring of snakes, who would sting when they were able to. We learnt all this mythological lore about the Muslims in the *bodhak* sessions (I hope I remember the word correctly)—i e, the sessions of intellectual understanding "*

After all this Balasaheb Deoras, the present RSS chief, had the courage to say that in their view all religions were equal and that the RSS is not opposed to secularism His courage has to be admired but definitions of communalism and secularism will have to be altered to accommodate the deeds of his organisation A more honest statement of the position can be found in the *Organiser* article by 'M' referred to above

"The Muslim often feels that India is not true to its pledge of 'secularism' I think he is right—in a way We are not, and cannot be secular in the sense that Hinduism and Hindu culture on the one side and Islam and Muslim culture on the other, will be on par in India Our predominant culture is Hindu—and not even communists can wish it away

"We are secular only in the sense that we don t have any official theology And that is so only because we have as many theologies as we have religious sects So the Hindu is secular because of the nature of Hinduism and not out of any special consideration for non Hindus While politicians may play with the words 'communal' and 'secular' to their heart's content, fact is that the predominant culture of a country will be its basic national culture It will be Islamic-Indic (based on river Indus) in Pakistan, it will be Hindu in India Politics cannot change the basic life of the mass of people "**

The Muslim is frankly told "The Muslim reader must be wondering why I m asking mostly him to do this, that and the other There is reason for that Mohammed (Peace be on him) one day announced that the yonder mountain will come to him the following day When it did not he quietly said 'If the

*Dhooria, Ram Lall, *I was a Swayamsewak*, pp 20-21

***Organiser*, June 3 1979

mountain does not come to Mohammed, then Mohammed will go to the mountain' In the Indian situation, the Hindu is the mountain, and the Muslim population, the Mohammed I need not elaborate "*

III

Plead Not Guilty

Is this concept and attitude to nationalism conducive to promotion of communal harmony? The question needs to be coolly contemplated The complaint of the RSS is that the charge of communalism against them is politically motivated and that not a single commission of inquiry has held the RSS guilty The defence given by them in their official publications is based on two facts One is a government document 'Brief description of the major communal incidents in the country during the year 1968, and first quarter of the year 1969' It briefly describes 23 incidents and does not name the RSS The other basis is the answers to two Parliament questions The first one was put by Jagannath Rao Joshi and Narendra Singh It read "Whether Govt are aware of such cases wherein courts of law have decided that the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh has been responsible for acts of violence statewise and if so the facts thereof" An identical question was put by Dattopant Thengadi, Lal K Advani, Dr Ram Kripal Sinha and Jagdish Mathur in Rajya Sabha The answer in both the cases was negative

Neither of these can be construed as a clearance by any commission of inquiry They are bare statements of fact not going into cause-and effect analysis in political sociological terms which alone could confirm or deny the involvement of a group or party

The only such report that they cite in their defence is that of the Raghubar Dayal Commission which on page 55, para 1 15 states "An allegation has been made that the incidents at Hatia were organised and planned by the members of the RSS and Jana Sangh There is no evidence about any such general organised attacks by the members of these bodies

* *Ibid*

forthcoming though allegations had been made of private *meetings at certain places or the houses of certain* persons said to be associated with RSS and Jana Sangh Even if it is true, private meetings at certain places would not suffice to establish the allegations against these organisations "

But the RSS defenders and propagandists are once again guilty of *suggestio falsi, suppressio veri* because they have preferred to ignore three more comprehensive reports—Madon Commission, Jaganmohan Reddy Commission and the Vythayathil Commission

The RSS may be greatly benefited if they carefully read Chapter 6 of the report by Justice Madon where he gives an anatomy of communal disturbances The following lines deserve special consideration "Communal tension does not spring up over-night It is built up over a period of time, suckled on communal propaganda, nursed on communal incidents and fed on rumours, until men's hearts are filled with hatred and their thoughts turn to violence "*

He gives a list of 27 common themes of communal propaganda viz ,**

"(1) the decrying of the religion, customs and traditions of the other community ,

(2) the charge that Muslims, with a few exceptions, are anti national and harbour extra territorial loyalty to Pakistan ,

(3) the appeasement of the Muslims by the Congress government with a view to secure their votes by upholding their so-called unreasonable demands in detraction of the rights of the Hindus ,

(4) the atrocities committed by the Muslims at the time of the *partition* of India ,

(5) the atrocities committed by Pakistan against Hindus residing in that country ,

(6) the destruction and desecration of Hindu temples and idols of Hindu gods by Muslim rulers in the past ,

(7) the forcible conversion of Hindus to Islam by Muslim rulers ,

* Madon, D P , *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Communal Disturbances at Bhiwandi, Jalgaon and Mahad* Vol I, Part II, pp 60-61

** *Ibid*, pp 63 64

(8) the claim that had Shivaji not lived, all Hindus in India would have been forcibly converted to Islam,

(9) an exhortation to the Muslims that as they were all converted to Islam from Hinduism, they should return to the Hindu fold,

(10) the charge that the Muslims alone are responsible for all communal disturbances which have taken place in the country,

(11) the charge that a Muslim has publicly slaughtered a a cow,

(12) the charge that a Muslim has descerated or offered insult to a Hindu temple or the idol of a Hindu god,

(13) the charge that a Muslim has kidnapped or raped a Hindu girl or outraged her modesty,

(14) advocating the sending away of all Muslims to Pakistan,

(15) a claim that India is the land of the Hindus only,

(16) advocating the Indianization of Muslims, by which is really intended the Hinduization of Muslims,

(17) an exhortation to the Hindus to unite and stand up to and fight the Muslim menace,

(18) the charge that some Muslim or Muslims have shouted pro-Pakistani slogans,

(19) applauding and praising for their valour and courage the Hindus of a town or city where communal disturbances had broken out and in which the Muslims had suffered more,

(29) the charge that the Hindu majority is out to crush the Muslim minority and to wipe out its religion, language and culture,

(21) the charge that the Muslims being in minority can get no justice or fair play in India,

(22) the charge that since the Hindus are in a majority, all governments in India are Hindu governments and will not protect the Muslim minority against the oppression of the Hindus,

(23) the charge that the Muslims, being in a minority, are discriminated against in service, employment and other matters;

(24) the charge that the grievances and complaints of the Muslims are not heeded by the administration or the police of

which the majority consists of Hindus ,

(25) the charge that the Muslims are being persecuted in India ,

(26) the charge that a Muslim cannot get any redress in India, and

(27) an exhortation to the Muslims that as the government and the police will not protect them, they should unite and fight the Hindus in self-defence and that the best form of defence is attack "

We would like to close this melancholy chapter by quoting specific instances Let us first take up the Raghubar Dayal Commission report It says ' On August 12, the Jana Sangh organised a procession and a meeting at Ranchi It distributed a hand-bill in this connection The contents of the hand bill referred to the undesirability of making Urdu the second official language of the state and made it clear that the opposition was to Urdu being made the second state language and not to the taking of such steps as might be considered necessary for encouraging the study of Urdu in the state It was said that participation in the procession and the meeting would save the country from further partition and from going *into the claws of Pakistan, that the question of language* which had led to the partition twenty years ago had been raised by some Pakistani and anti-national forces "

That the whole propaganda was started by the RSS became clear when immediately thereafter the RSS chief Golwalkar speaking in Ramlila Ground of Delhi declared "The Indian Muslims are trying to organise themselves around the slogan of Urdu Any status or recognition to Urdu would help the process of this separatist Muslim organisation which would result in another partition of the country "

Does this identity of views between the rioters of Ranchi and the RSS chief indicate anything ?

One does not know how the RSS would relish the fact that *the Vythayathil Commission appreciated a pamphlet of* Subhadra Joshi analysing whether the RSS had a hand in communal violence He has particularly commended her analysis of the RSS methodology and propaganda which reads as follows

"This methodology and propaganda for organising riots can be analysed into the following aspects

(a) Rousing communal feeling in the majority community by the propaganda that the Muslims are disloyal to the nation
(b) Deepening the fear in majority and playing upon that fear complex
(c) Infiltrating into administration and inducing the members of the civil police and army services into adopting communal attitude
(d) Training young people of the majority community in the use of such weapons as dagger, sword and spear
(e) Spreading rumours to widen the communal cleavage and giving to any incident or movement a communal colour"

A review of the riots that have occurred in free India would show that this technique has always been at play Training camps of the RSS are held every six months The administration and the machinery of law and order have been affected Anti Muslim propaganda is carried on relentlessly

Some other findings of Justice Vythayathil in his report are pertinent

i "I have no doubt that the Jana Sangh has contributed in large measure to the creation of communal tension in Tellicherry which led to the disturbances"
ii "There can be no doubt that the RSS is a blatant communal organisation"
iii "P8W1 (U P *Rajagopal, RSS chief worker in* Cannanore District) admits that the Sangh has its branch at Thiruvangod in Tellicherry town I have no doubt that the RSS had taken an active part in rousing up anti Muslim feeling among the Hindus of Tellicherry and preparing the background for disturbances"*

Mr Justice Jaganmohan Reddy who inquired into riots in

* Extracts from Report quoted in the *Secular Democracy*, January 1974, pp 24-25

Ahmedabad and other Gujarat towns has also made significant observations

1 "We cannot, therefore, accept the police case that the course of riots do not show that they were organised or directed There must have been some agency or agencies which must have exploited the Jagannath temple incident We have already noticed according to the special report of the Ramayan incident, the agitation had received the blessings of the local Bharatiya Jana Sangh workers who did not want to involve themselves directly but suggested the formation of an organisation known as Hindu Dharma Raksha Samiti with Harishchandra Panchal, an old RSS worker, as governor The evidence of the police and the report of the Commissioner further disclosed that two persons, viz Balkrishna and Sevakram Thakkar had resorted to indefinite fast outside Kagdapith police station and that during the fasting Bharatiya Jana Sangh workers and some others viz SSP corporator and a Hindu Mahasabha member had visited them and were present throughout in sympathy with the hunger-strike "

2 "This evidence as a whole indicates that the police had reason to believe that some local Jana Sangh leaders and workers were actively participating in the riots though these officers in their affidavits had not given any such indication and in cross examination attempts were made to prevaricate and plead ignorance of such participation "

3 "Another noticeable feature to which we must make a reference is the definite part played in various districts which were affected by the workers of the local Jana Sangh and Hindu Mahasabha organisations or by persons having leanings towards them There is evidence definitely that they took a leading part in the districts of Amreli, Banaskantha, Mehsana and Baroda In one of these instances, there is evidence to show that they were inciting the crowds to riot "

Sometimes it is said that there is no direct evidence of the involvement of Sangh in communal riots There are three main reasons for this confusion

(a) The RSS keeps no register of membership and there-

* See *Secular Democracy*, January 1974

fore there is no way of establishing whether a particular individual is connected with the organisation or not The RSS people are trained to tell a lie whenever required

(b) The RSS operates not in its own name but under the cover of front organisations some of them created locally for a specific purpose For example in Ahmedabad they worked in the name of the Hindu Dharma Raksha Samiti In Bhiwandi (Maharashtra) it was Rashtriya Utsav Mandal (RUM) and in Jalgaon the Shree Ram Tarun Mandal

(c) No organisation however communal, would pass a resolution about creating communal tension or send circulars to its members to indulge in communal violence The participation of individual members spread over in different areas should be considered sufficient proof unless there are sufficient reasons to believe that those members have been disowned, repudiated and punished at appropriate time and that has never been done by the RSS

The complicity and *modus operandi* of the RSS and its political front, the Jana Sangh, becomes absolutely clear from the findings of Justice Madon about the riots in Bhiwandi and Jalgaon We quote below the findings about the riots in Bhiwandi

"Under the second part of clause (c) of the Terms of Reference the Commission has to inquire into and report on whether there is any organisation or group within the limits of the Bhiwandi Nizampur Municipal Council and in the revenue villages of Khoni and Nagaon or outside the said places which has directly and indirectly provoked the Bhiwandi disturbances The organization which has both directly and indirectly provoked the disturbances which took place in Bhiwandi, Khoni, and *Nagaon on May 7, 1970* and thereafter is the Rashtriya Utsav Mandal the majority of the members of which belonged to the Jan Sangh or were pro- Jana Sangh and the rest, apart from a few exceptions, belonged to the Shiv Sena" *

* *Ibid*, Vol. III, p 310

Giving summary of facts and conclusions in Vol VI of the Report the Commission has made observations which make the responsibility clear and specific .

—"The behaviour of a section of Hindu processionists, particularly the RSS and the PSP sections, was calculated to provoke and humiliate the Muslims Provocative and anti-Muslim slogans were shouted and 'gulal' was thrown in such excess that it annoyed even the police officers and policemen present there '

—' The younger Hindu elements most of whom were either members of the Jana Sangh or were pro-Jana Sangh, not only insisted in the meeting of the Peace Committee and the Shiv Jayanti Utsav Samiti that the procession should go past the Nizampura Jumma Mosque but also emphatically demanded that there should be no restrictions whatever on the throwing of 'gulal or the shouting of slogans "

—"The Bhiwandi Branch of the Jana Sangh was established on October 21, 1964 and in October 1967 Dr Bhagwan Prabhashankar Vyas (J S W 1) was elected the President of the said Bhiwandi Branch and thereafter continued to be elected to that office year after year Dr Vyas and a number of other local Jana Sangh leaders have played an important part in the communal history of Bhiwandi This they did, not by carrying on their communal activities through the Bhiwandi Branch of the Jana Sangh but through an organisation formed by them in May 1969, namely the RUM '

—' The RUM was formed on May 23, 1969 by Dr B P Vyas, the President of the Bhiwandi Branch of the Jana Sangh, and a group of nineteen Hindus who had walked out of the Shiv Jayanti Utsav Samiti meeting on April 6, 1969 and had subsequently tendered their resignation from it in protest against the imposition of any restrictions on the Shiv Jayanti procession Out of these nineteen persons, fifteen belonged to the Jana Sangh or were pro Jana Sangh, one belonged to the Shiv Sena and the remaining three did not belong to any particular party at that time Right from its inception the RUM followed a communal line It held weekly prayer meetings and public meetings in which communal speeches were made and political leaders from outside Bhiwandi and others

who were well-known for making communal speeches were invited to be guest speakers This way it gained a great hold over a certain section of the Hindus in Bhiwandi and within a few months the tempo and intensity of its activities increased and spread out into the villages round about Bhiwandi and a branch of the RUM was formed at Padgha The RUM has played a leading role in the communal history of Bhiwandi and was responsible for bringing the communal tension in Bhiwandi to a pitch "

—"Another incident of 1968 which led to communal tension was the holding of the Jana Sangh District Convention in Bhiwandi on March 10, 1968 which coincided with Bakra Id

"The evidence does not leave any doubt that the day of Bakra-Id was deliberately selected in order to make this District Convention of the Jana Sangh synchronize with the celebrations of Bakra-Id "

—"The real aims of the RUM as apparent from its activities, the utterances of its leaders and of those whom it invited to speak at the public meetings organised by it and to whom it made its platform available, were very different The activities of the RUM were communally motivated right from the beginning The majority of its leaders consisted of hot-headed Hindu youngsters imbued with communalism, and, as the evidence shows, the guiding spirit of the RUM was Dr Vyas, the President of the Bhiwandi Branch of the Jana Sangh, or were pro Jana Sangh and the rest, with a few exceptions belonged to the Shiv Sena The RUM was so completely Jana Sangh dominated that in the beginning of September 1969, Dattatray Mahadeo More, Baliram More's brother, who was vice president of the RUM and who at that time did not belong to any political party, and Suresh Kandalkar, a Shiv Sena worker who was the Secretary of the RUM, resigned from their respective offices on this ground In all matters likely to create communal tension the RUM adopted a militant and aggressive attitude and set itself up as the champion of what it considered to be the rights of the Hindus against the Muslims and so to say, to teach the Muslims their place and if they were not willing to learn their place, to teach them a lesson It even went out of its way to create such occasions The speeches made by the RUM leaders and its guest speakers

at public meetings organised by the RUM leave no doubt what its intentions were"

—"The evidence shows that the attitude and the behaviour of the RUM leaders and some other Hindu leaders, including Baliram More, were such as to encourage the processionists *in their misbehaviour For instance*, *Narayan Badlapurkar*, the Vice President of the RUM, was the leader of the group from Sutar Ali which shouted vociferously and lingered near the Saudagar Mohalla Jamma Mosque until warned and pushed ahead by DSP Diwate Dr Vyas was in the midst of the group which was shouting 'Jana Sangh Zindabad', 'Dr Vyas Zindabad', 'Shiv Sena Zindabad' and 'Baliram More Zindabad' In Bhusar Mohalla Baliram More was standing next to a group of processionists from Thange Ali (which was part of his Municipal constituency) who were squatting on the road and shouting objectionable slogans and paying no heed to Inspector Pradhan This group was from the central part of the procession which was the rowdiest"

"The processionists were concerned, at the instance and instigation of the RUM A majority of the processionists had participated in the Shiv Jayanti procession carrying lathis to which Bhagwa Flags and banners were tied in order to circumvent the ban under section 37(1) of the Bombay Police Act, 1951, prohibiting the carrying of weapons, so that the processionists would be armed to meet the contingency of the Muslims starting any trouble either on their own or as a result of the deliberate provoking of the Muslims by the processionists There were thus prior preparations for the disturbances by the processionists"

"The organisation responsible for bringing the communal tension in Bhiwandi to a pitch is the Rashtriya Utsav Mandal The majority of the leaders and workers of the Rashtriya Utsav Mandal belonged to the Jana Sangh or were pro-Jana Sangh and the rest, apart from a few exceptions, belonged to the Shiv Sena"

On Jalgaon the Commission says

"An organisation which played a prominent part in the communal history of Jalgaon was the Shree Ram Tarun

Mandal (the RTM) It was a successor to another organization with a similar object called the 'Ram Zunzar' established in 1965 by P K Zare when he was the Secretary of the Jalgaon City Jana Sangh The RTM was formed in 1966 or 1967 When Zare was the Secretary of the RTM he either belonged to the Jana Sangh or was pro-Jana Sangh There was close identity of interests and objects between the Jalgaon City Jana Sangh and the RTM, and when the Jalgaon City Jana Sangh commenced displaying boards of a communal nature and against municipal administration the RTM followed suit The RTM was established, controlled and managed by the Jalgaon City Jana Sangh and the Jalgaon District Jana Sangh and followed their policies It was in reality merely an organisation to carry out the politics of the Jalgaon City Jana Sangh and the Jalgaon District Jana Sangh under a different label "

"The communal harmony and amity which prevailed in Jalgaon was shattered by the Jana Sangh on October 1, 1970 '

"The organizations which have fomented communal tension in Bhiwandi are

1 The Jalgaon City Branch of the Jana Sangh, and
2 the Shree Ram Tarun Mandal which was completely controlled and managed by the Jalgaon City Branch of the Jana Sangh and the Jalgaon District Branch of the Jana Sangh

There is no evidence that any organization or group outside Jalgaon has fomented communal tension in Jalgaon "

Can there be more authentic and conclusive evidence of the involvement of the RSS ?

Chapter 6

The Cult and The Culture

Season your admiration for a while
With an attent ear, till I may deliver
Upon the witness of these gentlemen
This marvel to you

I

Spider s Web

When the controversy about relationship between the Janata Party and the RSS was at its peak in 1978 79 a journalist friend asked me "Do you think Atal Bihari Vajpayee will stick with the RSS? 'After becoming the Minister for External Affairs he had repeatedly asserted that he would continue the Nehru policy of non alignment and that it had never been an election issue He had gone to Pakistan and tried to make friends, reciting Urdu poetry in surprisingly chaste accent He had even talked of continuing the friendliest of relations with the Arab countries and had made no move to extend full recognition to Israel He had played host at his residence to Urdu poets, many of them Muslims, and had served them Kashmiri style non-vegetarian delicacies and the guests had been impressed not only by the culinary art but more by the courtesy and politeness of the man "He appears to be an independent liberal and, for all I know, acts according to his own conscience and not on the dictates of anybody' , said this friend

"There is no question of estrangement between the RSS and Vajpayee All this is being done with perfect understanding What would the RSS lose if a few gestures of Vajpayee can

wash the stigma of communalism? There can be no better public relations man for the Sangh," I replied

I also said that it would be wrong to draw a conclusion from Vajpayee's behaviour that the Sangh had got revolutionised by the impact of power And I informed him about how he had given explanation for his behaviour in a meeting of shakhamen held at the RSS office at Jhandewalan, New Delhi Top RSS officers working in the capital had come together and a volley of questions had been showered on the External Affairs Minister who had just returned from his Pakistan visit Without so much as flapping a wing Vajpayee told them "We should not worry overmuch about these things and certainly not give any public reaction Let us not forget that the government in New Delhi is still dominated by the old guard, most of whom were Nehru's colleagues It is not *our* government yet that we should press for fundamental policy changes in accordance with our thinking *We have to work hard to create conditions which may bring* about a total change of guard "*

Even if we do not trust such a report, I told him, a man who has once been through the drill of shakha cannot go out unless he is thrown out as happened with Balraj Madhok

To understand the RSS more important than words is the *mystique* of shakha The Sangh is a web of shakhas spread throughout the length and breadth of the country with a few threads extending to foreign lands where the Hindus, both Indian and non Indian citizens, live and work And according to the RSS leaders themselves the shakha is the key to all their work In his last speech before he died Golwalkar particularly emphasised the importance of the daily shakha saying "We will not succeed in the different types of work undertaken by us, without the shakhas" He further underlined the point by asserting that "wherever there is an efficient shakha we can positively succeed in whatever we undertake" ** The policies or pronouncements have no significance in understanding the Sangh as compared to the shakha, the system of organisation In fact, when a

*These are not exact words because there is no written record No minutes of discussion at such meetings are kept in the RSS I got the report from one who attended but the name cannot be disclosed for obvious reasons

**Published in the *Motherland*, July 22 1973

The Sangh provides both. Rarely do we see boys who are active in the playgrounds or other social-cultural activities (like debate, dramas, clubs) going to the RSS shakha. If ever such a person does stray into it he drops out rather quickly. Almost all the RSS drop-outs that I have met—and the number is fairly large—belong to that category.

Those who get addicted and stay on are provided the titillating sensation of having been initiated into an exclusive group, the oath ceremony serves to deepen the illusion Daily contact with officers of the Sangh, the respectful manner of mutual address, common living in outings and short and long durationcamps—all these programmes act as the various strings which bind the emotional youth to the shakha A willing suspension of disbelief thus secured, the boys are subjected to a process of indoctrination At least once a week in each shakha there is a lecture called 'boudhik' These lectures, even from the highest, are profusely illustrated with stories from history and the *Puranas* There are no conceptual ambiguities and no philosophical intricacies it is a simple, straight assault on the reasoning faculty through emotions The speakers avoid, rather carefully, serious discussion or analysis of any problem—contemporary or past—of history, philosophy, economy, politics or social life No noble doubts, only fiery assertions

The total thought content of the RSS can be summed up as follows 'Hindus have lived in India since times immemorial, Hindus are the nation because all culture, civilisation and life is contributed by them alone, non Hindus are invaders or guests and cannot be treated as equal unless they adopt Hindu traditions, culture etc, the non Hindus, particularly Muslims and Christians, have been enemies of everything Hindu and are, therefore, to be treated as threats, the freedom and progress of this country is the freedom and progress of the Hindus, the history of India is the history of the struggle of the Hindus for protection and preservation of their religion and culture against the onslaughts of these aliens, the threat continues because the power is in the hands of those who do not believe in this nation being a Hindu Nation, those who talk of national unity as the unity of all those who live in this country are motivated by the selfish desire of cornering minority votes and are therefore traitors, the unity and consolidation of the Hindus is the dire

need of the hour because the Hindu people are surrounded on all sides by enemies, the Hindus must develop the capacity for massive retaliation and offensive is the best defence, lack of unity is the root cause of all the troubles of the Hindus and the Sangh is born with the divine mission to bring about that unity'

Without any fear of contradiction it can be stated that nothing more than this has been said in the RSS shakhas during the past 54 years of its existence Every year the Sar Sangh chalak prepares a lecture on some components of this basic argument couching it in the current political vocabulary and *that speech is repeated by him at all the places he visits during* his countrywide tour The same theme, and more or less the same style of presentation, is picked up by the provincial organisers and those entrusted with the task of intellectual training at various other levels Attempt is also made to din these ideas into the minds of swayamsewaks through a kind of catechism, *charcha* they call it, where all these ideas are repeated through one line questions and answers The songs and stories, which ordinarily would seem to provide amusement, are really the cement and mortar to stick these ideas in the mind They also act as garnishing to make the dish more attractive The whole being of a swayamsewak is thus rolled into the wrappings and trappings of this set of ideas which goes by the name of noble Hindu ideal in the RSS diction It naturally has an opiate effect on the mind which is rendered insensitive to variety, nuance, suggestion or alternative thought In a word, fanaticism takes control of his reason

All this has a peculiar attraction for a mind desirous of assertion in social life but reluctant or incapable of encountering its complexities and intricacies We have the testimony for this of K R Malkani the editor of the *Organiser* who, explaining the attraction of the RSS for young men, wrote

"The weekly *baudhiks* (talks) introduced the swayamsewaks to history and culture, literature and religion The RSS had a clear cut consistent and complete philosophy that lighted up many dark corners of the mind and explained things not clear till then A certain certitude filled his mind This was tonic for the soul The Gita says *'Sanshyatma Vinashyate'*, persons

full of doubt, get destroyed And here in the RSS there were no Doubting Thomases "*

Those who tried to render the RSS toothless and venomless by binding it down to a written constitution were mistaken because the process of indoctrination remains unaffected by whatever is written therein Many people may be surprised to know—but it is a fact—that 99 per cent of those who regularly attend shakha do not know that there is anything like a constitution which governs the organisation—what to speak of asserting the right to convass support, cast vote or be elected to any position Which of the office bearers have been elected and when, are irrelevant questions because the whole thing is based on faith The Constitution** should be treated as a *document of minor academic value for understanding the* Sangh, in fact only to emphasise its irrelevance

The real structural model is not the modern democratic structure followed by various social or cultural organisations but something else For that let us turn to Golwalkar who while describing the Sangh technique says

"Without a suitable technique no ideal, however great, can be realised Even in our various sects, each individual has a definite emblem in keeping with his particular sect He dresses and adorns himself in a particular manner, recites a particular *mantra* and follows a particular code of discipline A Shaiva, a Shakta or a Vaishnava, each has his own method of worship, his own ritual, his own codes and conventions regulating his life We too have evolved a technique, an emblem, a '*mantra*' and a code of discipline in keeping with our ideal of an unified and disciplined national life ' ***

The *man ra* in the case of the RSS is Hindu sangathan, the emblem is Bhagwa Dhwaj (which is treated as guru) and the code of discipline is the paraphernalia of daily shakha with its variety of rituals The uniform and the lathi stick serve for the distinctive dress and adornment And like all religious sects the

**Organiser* April 8, 1979
**See Appendix V
***Golwalkar M S , *op cit* , p 335

Sangh has its own festivals too These festivals—some of them of a purely political nature and others capable of being put to such use—mark out the division of time for the swayamsewak There are six of them and they occur roughly every alternate month

The Vijayadashami (around October) is considered the most important and observed as the day of weapon worship Shakhas bring out route marches and there is public display of physical prowess While preparing for the celebrations the swayamsewaks are told that the occasion marks the day when valorous heroes of yore used to launch their campaigns of conquest and that tradition we have to revive Then comes in mid January the Makar Sankraman This festival , according to an official publication, "is observed *in the country under various names The Rashtriya* Swayamsewak Sangh seeks to foster the feeling of integral nationalism on the basis of mutual sense of oneness For that reason also this festival has been included among the Sangh festivals because it promotes social life based on love and affection * The Varsh Pratipada which is observed on April 1 every year, is connected in the RSS mind with the starting of the new calendar by Yudhishthira, Vikramaditya and Shaliwahan as also with the coronation of Rama The added significance for the Sangh is that the birthday of its founder coincides with it In May end is observed the Hindu Samrajya Dinotsava to commemorate the coronation of Shivaji which is supposed to be the first proclamation of the founding of the Hindu empire In August comes the Raksha Bandhan which occasion is used to remind the swayamsewaks of the commitment to be prepared to make supreme sacrifice to protect the honour of Hindu society And the year is rounded off with Vyas Pooja or Guru Poornima when the swayamsewaks worship the Bhagwa Dhwaj and make offerings of money These anonymous offerings constitute the fund of the RSS

The basic thing to be noted is that all the festivals are invested with what in common parlance would be called political significance The treatment and use of festivals symbolises in

**Hamare Utsav* (Hindi) p 15 This booklet contains detailed description of why and how the festivals are celebrated

RSS practice of covering the cake of politics with the icing of religion and culture They have adopted the form of religious cults to promote a definite variety of politics

Before we come to their political operations some other aspects of its organisational form should be taken note of In the eary stages the prayer and the pledge proclaimed the adherence of the Sangh to the sanyasi cult of Samarth Ramdas the guru of Shivaji, which helped the Maratha warrior a great deal in his war against the Mughal emperor That was perhaps the chief reason for the impression that the Sangh was trying to revive the Maratha empire But the emphasis was more on Ramdas than on Shivaji In the shakhas the story is repeatedly told that after victory Shivaji had placed his sceptre and crown at the feet of Ramdas who commanded him to rule in his behalf It may have been a matter of expediency for Shivaji who was constrained to propitiate the Brahmins but for RSS it provides the model of its relationship with politics, the political power must bow before the Sangh If at all the Sangh seeks to revive an empire it is not of Shivaji but of the Peshwas who called themselves the descendants of the guru of the true blue blood

The fund collection is another peculiar feature Like membership, it is in the style of religious cults or mafia There is no record, no registers and no receipts Not only is it difficult to find out whether a certain person is a member of the RSS or not, it is also not possible to know who has paid how much and what is the total collection Recently a system has been intro duced whereby the swayamsewaks of a shakha inform the *karyavah* (secretary) of the respective amounts donated but that too does not make the contribution public It remains an exclu sively private affair, some thing between the preceptor and the disciple The system has given rise to many malpractices within the organisation Above all, it creates grave suspicion that large sums of doubtful origin and character are being absorbed with- out any possibility of detection The total amount collected all over India is counted and declared at the central level only and from there disbursements are made for meeting expenses at lower levels

In line with the model of the religious cult the nomen clature for an RSS organiser is *pracharak* This institution is the king pin of the entire structure The pracharak is a person

who has volunteered to undertake full time work, and therefore has vowed not to marry nor lead the life of a householder There are only a few exceptional cases of married men being accepted for the job The pracharaks are selected, approved, appointed, transferred and controlled by the Sar Karyavah (the General Secretary) through the Prachar Pramukh (the Chief Organiser) Important pracharaks are generally young men who have gone through the rigorous training in three successive courses called the Officers Training Camps (OTCs) The pracharak is not elected but selected and is responsible only to the higher level pracharak, not to the local shakha officers who are not full time workers of the Sangh His word carries the final authority unless, in special circumstances, there is a revolt in which case he is transferred to some other place Such occasions are very rare and complaints against pracharaks are generally not heeded by higher authorities

In this context the report of Hemendra Nath Pandit is very significant He had once sent a letter to Golwalkar containing serious charges against the pracharaks in West Bengal We quote here only one paragraph of his long letter

"To crown all, serious charges have been levelled against some pracharaks of bad moral character Vices concerning women are alleged Even more serious are allegations of unnatural sex crimes of which juvenile swayamsewak have been the victims I know personaly that one pracharak tried to make money for himself out of a transaction in connection with the *Svastika* (the Bengali weekly organ of the Sangh in West Bengal) Other allegations of misappropriation of funds have also been heard Even the provincial organisation has rendered its position precarious by making itself open to the charge of dishonestly appropriating and misusing the funds of the Bastuhra Sahayata Samiti * The Purvanchal pracharak has been taking trips by air of which the expenses are being borne by the above Samiti One typewriter has been bought at a cost of Rs 1100 one camera for Rs 1000 and one microphone for Rs 2000 ' **

*The Samiti is an organisation founded by the RSS for giving relief to East Bengal refugees It is manned almost exclusively by grown up swayamsewaks

*Pandit Hemendra Nath *op cit* pp 4 5

The effect of that report, according to Pandit, was almost nil

"The net results were (1) No reply to my complaints on any of the above counts —neither regret nor any feeling of surprise or anxiety, (2) The Mahratti pracharak who was the centre of the corrupt and selfish clique that had spoiled many teen aged boys (many more had left because of him) was retained in Calcutta with his family brought over and a monthly allowance sanctioned for their maintenance, (3) The provincial office was alerted with information about my complaints and advised to keep closer contact with me *

A detailed understanding of the pracharak system is very important, the lines of pracharaks act as the motor and sensory nerves of the central authority controling the whole body Whenever a new organisation is to be set up a suitable pracharak is detailed for it with a specific assurance from the non RSS promoters that his actions would be judged by the parent organisation and by nobody else Even within the RSS the pracharak at every level except at the top is the most important functionary, the most authoritative expression of the ideal, whose word is law for others

The similarity of nomenclature between Sar Sangh chalak and the Sangh chalaks at provincial and other levels is deceptive and causes confusion to outsiders Whereas the former is the real lord and master of the entire network (his nominal cons titutional position as only 'the friend philosopher and guide notwithstanding) the others are just ornamental figureheads with no real authority (even though the constitution given all the authority in their hands The Sar Sangh chalak is nominated by his predecessor and not subject to change while the other Sangh chalaks are discovered by the pracharaks and are subject to change through election which is a mere formality because the electors generally owe unflinching loyalty to the pracharak If we carry the analogy of the biological system further the relationship between the Sar Sangh chalak and the pracharaks

**Ibid*, pp 5 6

is the same as between the nerve centre and the nerves, the non-pracharaks acting as subsidiary organs

As a result of the mental and physical drilling that the swayamsewaks go through a deep sense of loyalty grows in them towards the pracharak It is consciously fostered by the old timers who have gone through long duration training in Officers Training Camps The virtues of obedience are also instilled through stories like that of Ekalavya A practice in all the Sangh meetings is to ask a question "What will you do if you are asked by your officer (adhikari) to jump into a well?" The answer most appreciated by the group is a prompt 'I will jump immediately' If even the slightest hesitation is shown there is a derisive laughter from all sides Stories are told to illustrate how those who showed unquestioning obedience accomplished glorious acts of heroism for their respective countries and how the Doubting Thomases brought disaster Many of the games played in the shakha also are calculated to cultivate this virtue

The recipients of all devotion reverence and obedience are the pracharaks, mostly in accordance with their hierarchical status and this culture has a deep impact on all that RSS does in various fields of its activity The attachment to a central authority through a system of loyalties also explains why a swayamsewak, even if he be a Vajpayee, cannot leave the RSS In the absence of the RSS cushion he would feel like a fish out of water

II

Political Acrobatics

We have discussed above the process of culturisation which the RSS swayamsewaks go through The political role of the Sangh can be properly understood only if it is kept in mind Deep devotion and total surrender of personality that it develops in them gives the appearance of its being a highly disciplined body Those who do not evoke the sense of loyalty in swayamsewaks cannot however expect either discipline or courtesy, because, all that is sucked up and absorbed in the shakha Civilities are reserved for the in group, the 'we', not for the out group We have seen the way even men

like Gandhi and Jaya Prakash have been treated, Madhu Limaye, Raj Narain, Charan Singh, H N Bahuguna, Dr K L Shrimali, Subhadra Joshi should not complain of 'hoodlum tactics' because that is the culture for adversaries In the eyes of the Sangh they are as much the object of hatred as Muslims because for those initiated into the cult of the RSS the Sangh is the religion Hindu is only the name The set of values and scale of loyalties which form the basic ingredients of the RSS culture make the Sangh men different from others and render them incapable of coexisting with other members of society in a decent and civilised manner That gives rise to the tensions and complications in the political field necessitating declarations from time to time, that the RSS is a cultural and not a political organisation

This assertion is wholly untenable because facts show that the Sangh is nothing if not political The culture which is fostered through the shakha drill is political not only in essence but in its entirety If the political content be taken out, nothing would be left behind Even the denial of its political character is deeply political Take for instance the resolution passed by its Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha at its meeting held on March 24 26, 1979 It reads

'The ABPS is amused at the campaign of calumny launched recently against the RSS by power seekers who have decided to use RSS as a scape goat in the game of their factional in fighting and by a section of the Press committed to these elements

"The RSS has made it amply clear that it is a social and cultural organisation and that it is not at all interested in power politics Further, the generation or growth of any nationalist patriotic force in Bharat is not likely to be welcomed by super powers interested in extending their spheres of influence in this part of the globe The news item released by TASS on February 8 is one of the indicators of this fact We however feel confident that the ever alert people of this country will not be misled by such politically motivated propaganda The ABPS exhorts all sections of the population to continue to extend their sincere support to the nation building activities of the RSS and frustrate the designs of such super powers and their local stooges' *

*Published in the *Organiser* April 8, 1979

be the only valid motive force against the Moghuls because the system of governance was the same in both cases People in those times, were apathetic to change of rulers because it hardly ever brought about any change or improvement in their lives They were moved by a sense of loyalty which could be buttressed by invoking the sanction of some supra-natural or divine authority In modern times people are moved by more secular considerations and whoever seeks to hold the affection of the masses over a long period has to come out with a viable programme of social transformation which may assure the *downtrodden that their interests would get precedence over the* interests of the top dogs, the affluent class and the class of those who have been dominating others just because they happened to be born in a so-called high caste family

The RSS, as we have noticed in Chapter 2, has been born and *bred as a protector of the status quo with slight modifica*tion to find a place in the sun for the lower middle class—the petty traders and the job doers The section whose interests it sought to promote are not known for waging an open struggle They like to hang on to the coat tails of those who wield power, prestige and wealth by virtue of their inheritance and ability to exploit Its alliance, therefore, could not but be with the upper classes who also treated it as no more than a pressure mechanism, a kind of shoo dog to frighten the army of hungry wolves intent on devouring their privileges, a brake on the popular movement and a diversion on the growing consciousness of class differences and clash of class interests It could never, therefore, develop the courage and confidence to project a socio-economic programme which could lend legitimacy to its politics In the case of an openly status quo party it is but it is not easy for a group which hangs, like Trishanku, between the concretised class position In the very nature of things the RSS could act only surreptitiously

If it has been able to develop some political following it is more because it comes clad in the respectable cloak of religion, talking in terms of devotion and renunciation, *tyag* and *tapasya*. *And it makes headway only when the main flank of the national* movement tends to lose or loses its moorings whether it was in the short period of transition in 1947 or in the confused situation following the Chinese invasion and the death of Nehru

or now, for that matter, when Indira Gandhi made a somersault and projected her Sanjay face In other words the RSS makes headway only in conditions of instability and confusion, when the goal is not clear and masses feel frustrated

Its politics, therefore, has been to keep its face hidden while the nation is marching ahead and to make an appearance when there are signs of fatigue and ennui The secrecy about its aims has been its major asset Balraj Madhok is the classic example of a man being discarded only because he made sub-rosa operation difficult He insisted on open assertion of the rightist character of the Sangh and relegating the RSS to the position of a cadre training institution The Note which Madhok submitted at the Kanpur session of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh for the consideration of the Working Committee is significant in this context It says "To say that' if rightism means status quoism the Jana Sangh is a leftist party' is to betray mental confusion Right and Left are two distinct and well defined concepts Class struggle and state control of all means of production and distribution are essential features of leftist socialist ideology Jana Sangh has always rejected both these concepts They are neither in keeping with 'Bharatiya Sanskriti and Maryada' nor are they conducive to economic well being of the people together with freedom"

On the problems of organisation he made suggestions which would put an end to the influence of the RSS pracharaks in the BJS He had recommended in para 7 'The institution of Sangathan Mantries (organisation secretaries) should be abolished This is essential to develop a sense of responsibility in elected presidents and secretaries of the party and create local leadership at all levels Whole time workers may be appointed at different levels to extend the organisational work But such workers should be paid by and be answerable to the respective unit of the party" Later on in the same note he pointed out, 'It is wrong to think that only a person who has passed through a particular mill can become the leader '

The organising secretaries in the BJS were really pracharaks of the RSS, paid and sustained by the RSS They tended to be answerable only to the parent body and not the democratic forums of which they were members Madhok also doubted their ability for mass work He had thus become inconvenient

and had refused to be squeezed out Therefore he was thrown out His position had been earlier described by Baburao Patel of *Mother India* in his characteristic style "Because he did not put the short khaki trousers under the black cap and a white shirt and carry harmless bamboo stick to salute Guruji M S Golwalkar of the RSS, Madhok was soon replaced by Atal Bihari Vajpayee who touches Guruji Golwalkar's feet without even having an attack of dyspepsia "

The opportunity that Indira Gandhi provided by inept handling of the situation after the Bangladesh War and more particularly during the emergency brought the RSS fingers on the steering wheel of power It was a testing time for it but it failed to contain itself and showed its hand Bahuguna spilt the beans in a long interview to the *Sunday* in which he gave details of the RSS operations He pointed out that as long as the RSS was in the government the communal riots could not be stopped because that gave respectability to communalism and demoralised administration

On the relationship of the Janata Party with the RSS he said

"It is the relationship of wood and fire In 1977, the camel put its head in the tent, and all through the last two years the camel has been trying to take over the tent What is the Jana Sangh? The Jana Sangh was the front organisation of the RSS *This front organisation was merged with the Janata* but the loyalty of the cadre was not merged — their loyalty remained with the RSS Plus the other RSS front organisations remained in existence The Vidyarathi Parished remained, the Yuva Janata Morcha was formed—as if the Vidyarathi Parishad was not enough Then the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh was activated and received open patronage from the Jana Sanghis in power See what happened during the water crisis in Delhi It is true that one of the reasons why a person like Chandrashekharji was chosen by consensus as the Janata President was in order to prevent the domination of the party by any particular wing But the Jana Sangh kept increasing its influence

"Take the question of membership Any independent observer will tell you that RSS volunteers took charge of enrolment of members At least I know about UP and this certainly

happened in UP I can prove it In every village this happened. Everywhere the Jana Sangh kept running parallel offices, holding parallel meetings Wherever the Jana Sangh leaders went, they only kept in touch with other Jana Sanghis Through the RSS, a parallel programme was in operation "

Bahuguna's comment on the way they tried to tackle the leaders is interesting

"The Jana Sangh has operated very cleverly They deployed some people on Morarjibhai, whom Morarjibhai began to trust Some concentrated on Babuji, some on Chandrashekhar, some on Charan Singh Yes, Jana Sanghis came to me too, but Jana Sangh *laga lekin chipka nahin* (it did not stick) The Jana Sangh had its people in every camp In some places, the friendship could not survive the first strains when they came—for example, the friendship with Chaudhury Sahib

' They told Babuji that they had wanted to make him Prime Minister but unfortunately were not able to because of JP's and Acharya Kripalani's choice of Morarjibhai So Babuji felt that they were sympathetic to him Morarjibhai was convinced that he had this strong and organised force of the Jana Sangh behind him and this combined with the Congress (O) made him invincible "

All these disclosures are damaging enough , but the worst that has happened from the Sangh viewpoint is that the situation has dragged them out of secure privacy So far they were fighting from behind the hills of obscurity, now they are in the open plains The RSS chief is trying to take on the old cover and make people believe that whatever is said about the Sangh is 'motivated' by blind hatred

People are bound to ask Bahuguna, Madhu Limaye, Raj Narain and others of that category are perhaps 'politically motivated' or are 'habitual Sangh baitors' But what about Atal Bihari Vajpayee? He is not under the influence of any anti Sangh foreign power Nor is he interested in the break up of the Janata Party And he unhesitatingly proclaims his unbreakble association with the RSS from the very childhood Why does he feel constrained to say that "RSS claiming

to be a social and cultural organisation, should have taken greater pains to demonstrate that they did not seek a political role" He has specifically pointed out the hypocrisy of the claim "Patronising a press that takes sides in the sordid politics of power, involvement in youth bodies that interest with political parties, Participating in trade union rivalries such as the one which recently brought enormous misery to the people of Delhi by callously cutting off the water supply—these do not help an organisation to establish its political credentials "

He has voiced the doubts of people even on its communal character

"It is possible that some people genuinely feel apprehensive about the RSS A certain onus accordingly developed on the RSS, an onus that has not been discharged effectively by the RSS Its repudiation of the theocratic form of the state was welcome, yet the question could legitimately be asked—why does it not open its doors to non Hindus? Recent statements of the RSS chief, Mr Deoras, indicate that non Hindus are being encouraged to join the organisation A natural corollary of this process would be clear enunciation by the RSS that by 'Hindu Rashtra' it means the Indian nation which includes non-Hindus as equal members ' *

On account of these manifest doubts there has been a lot of wrangling about the members of the RSS becoming members of the Janata Party Such questions had never arisen in the Jana Sangh because soon after its birth it had been totally converted into a political wing of the RSS In the Janata Party there was a preponderance of non Janata elements who wanted to save it from becoming another Jana Sangh Therefore the question of dual membership came up as soon as the formation of the party was declared It must be said to the credit of the RSS men that they made their position clear from the beginning although, with clever tactics, they did not let the hope die that they might realise the incongruity of the position and come round to severing the RSS connection The matters were brought to a head when there grew a strong feeling that they were only buying time till they capture the levers of power in the government and organisation The ten year time of which

**Indian Express* August 2, 1979

Deoras talked in Bhopal was the period they had set for the culturisation of the Janata Party so that it could willingly submit itself to the RSS

The apprehension about the loyalty of the Sangh men is quite natural Besides the facts that came to light the culture they imbibe in the RSS itself makes them suspect Unlike others who uphold humanist and democratic values they refuse to recognise the coexistence of a multiplicity of loyalties Otherwise why should they interpret change of religion as change of loyalty? When such people refuse to give total loyalty to a political party those whose political culture is different are bound to feel insecure They had before them, whenever they cared to remember, the examples of the Hindu Mahasabha, the Ram Rajya Parishad etc which had lost their identities as a result of cooperaion with the RSS (in the garb of Jana Sangh) A plea is taken on behalf of the RSS that it is not a political party in the sense that it is not interested in power politics It has also been asserted that its concept of Hindu Rashtra is the same as Bharatiya Rashtra and therefore does not in any way conflict with the Janata Party's faith in secularism

So far as the second plea is concerned it has been sufficiently discussed in the preceding pages and we have seen how divergent it is from the concept of nationalism on which our Constitution is based and which forms the basic thinking of all non RSS India However before we come to a close of our exposition it would be proper to deal with the relationship of the RSS with politics and, in that light, examine its claim of being disinterested in power The RSS, let it be understood, makes a significant distinction between the State and the Nation, the *raj* and the *rashtra* It refuses to take cognisance of the human advance to democracy which implies obliteration of this distinction When the State represents the totality of national life, the sovereignty of the people, the Nation cannot exist apart from it unless, of course, the sovereignty is lost and the Nation is subjugated by an imperialist or colonial power, the vice versa also is true For the RSS it is not so They consider Statehood only a function of the Nation, something like the government which wields power and authority to keep law and order In other words they think only in terms of a

police state and do not wish it to meddle with the economic, *social, educational and cultural life As such politics, which is* just a means of securing power to rule over society and manage law and order, would be only one of the several spheres of activity which the cultural work of the RSS encompasses Therefore the RSS would act the supra party, the extra-constitutional authority or the *rajguru*, as Malkani likes to describe it, it would like to influence the State power and politics through its other activities but would not like to subject its operations to democratic discipline by agreeing to the proposition that in a democracy the whole sphere of human activity is the concern of the State and therefore of politics The RSS is not a state within a state, it seeks to be a sovereign authority above the State 'I am the State' said Hitler, I am the State and much more than that its spiritual mentor—a supra natural authority " says the RSS

This being the situation the RSS man owing loyalty to what he considers a 'superior sovereignty' would not agree to get subsumed into what, in his opinion is a narrow institution like a political party When he says that he would abide by the discipline of the political party he says it in the belief that the work of the RSS outside would so transform the situation that the party as a whole would accept the discipline of the RSS It happened with the Jana Sangh and the phenomenon can be repeated with any other party It is for the others to decide whether men of such culture can be accepted as safe partners

Whether the RSS would change its character is altogether an irrelevant question For the Sangh any change tantamounts to the fundamental issue— To be or not to be If they change the ideological position they would lose the very *raison d etre* of their existence And if they change the organisational form and structure the mystery—the main pull—will be gone

The difficulty that the RSS is facing today, as we pointed out earlier, is that they have been dragged out of their privacy and exposed to public scrutiny Their beliefs till now secure in the closed precincts of the cult, are being subjected to the tests of human reason and found wanting—something very annoying to the faithfuls The Doubting Thomases threaten to break the certitude which Malkani flaunted as the main attraction of the RSS It is the misfortune of the RSS that its hand has been

seen rather too soon because its men could not display the superhuman quality of holding with sobreity the heady wine of power

Veer Savarkar said about the RSS "The epitaph for the RSS volunteer will be that he was born, he joined the RSS and he died without accomplishing anything,"

The epitaph will perhaps have to be changed to "Here lies the RSS which for five decades and more strove to see the face of power But the moment it came face to face with power, it collapsed"

Ravana tried to lift Shiva's bow and failed and became a laughing stock of the whole world !

Appendices

Appendix I
RSS PRAYER

प्रार्थना

नमो मातृभूमि जिथे जन्म लामी ।
नमो आर्यभूमि जिथे वाढलो मी ।।
नमो धर्मभूमि जिथेच्याच कामी ।
पडो देह माझा सदा ती नमामी ।।

हे गुरु श्री राम दूता शील हमको दीजिए ।
शीघ्र सारे सद्‌गुणो से पूर्ण हिन्दू कीजिए ।।
लीजिए हमको शरण म रामपथी हम बनें ।
ब्रह्मचारी धर्मरक्षक वीर व्रतधारी बनें ।।
राष्ट्र गुरु श्री समर्थ रामदास की जय ।
भारत माता की जय ।।

The Hindi Marathi Prayer which was sung in the RSS shakhas till 1939 when the present Sanskrit prayer was introduced In English it would read

Salutations to you, O Motherland where I am born,
Salutations to you, O the Land of Aryas where I have grown,
Salutations to you, O Sacred Land where I have worked,
My body will ever and again bow to you in salutation.

O Guru, the messenger of Rama, grant us good character,
Give us soon all the virtues to become full Hindus,
Induct us to your grace and make us followers of Rama
May we become celibate, defenders of faith and men of brave determination

Victory to Samarth Shri Ramdas, the Guru of theNation
Victory to Mother India

प्रार्थना

नमस्ते सदा वत्सले मातृभूमे
त्वया हिन्दुभूमे सुखेंव वर्धितोऽहम् ।
महामङ्गले पुण्यभूमे त्वदर्थे
पतत्वेष काया नमस्ते नमस्ते ॥१॥

प्रभा शक्तिमन् हिन्दुराष्ट्राङ्गभूता
इमे सादरन् त्वान् नमामो वयम्
त्वदीयाय कार्याय बद्धा कटीयम्
शुभामाशिषन् देहि तत्पूर्तये ।
अजय्याञ्च च विश्वस्य देहीश शक्तिम्
सुशीलञ् जगद् येन नम्रम भवेत्
श्रुतञ् चैव यत् कण्टकाकीर्णमार्गम्
स्वयम् स्वीकृतन नस् सुगङ्कारयेत ॥२॥

समुत्कर्षनिश्श्रेयसस्यैकमुग्रम्
परम साधनन् नाम वीरव्रतम्
तदन्तस् स्फुरत्वक्षया ध्येयनिष्ठा
हृदन्त) (प्रजागर्तु तीव्राऽनिशम् ।
विजेत्री च नस् सहता कार्यशक्तिर्
विधायास्य धर्मस्य सरक्षणम्
परवं वैभवन नेतुमेतत स्वराष्ट्रम्
समर्था भवत्वाशिषा ते भृशम् ॥३॥

॥ भारत-माता की जय ॥

English version of the above Sanskrit Prayer which is sung in the RSS shakhas these days is given below

O Affectionate Motherland, I eternally bow to you
O Land of Hindus, you have reared me in comfort
O Sacred Land, the Great Creator of Good, may this body of mine be dedicated to you
I again and again bow before you

O God Almighty, we the integral parts of Hindu Rashtra salute you in reverence,
For your cause have we girded up our loins,
Give us your blessings for its accomplishment,
Give us also the invincible power, the purity of

character which may win the respect of entire world and
the wisdom which may facilitate the thorny path
that we have consciously adopted

Let our hearts be inspired by the bold determination
to achieve salvation along with prosperity which
alone is the outstanding means
Let undying and intense devotion to the goal be
ever alive in our minds,
With your blessings let our all-conquering organised
force meet with eminent success in taking
this Nation of ours to the highest pinnacle
of glory while defending our dharma

Victory to Mother India !

Appendix II
RSS PRATIGYA

प्रतिज्ञा

सर्व शक्तिमान श्री परमेश्वर तथा अपने पूर्वजो का स्मरण कर मैं प्रतिज्ञा करता हूँ कि अपने पवित्र हिन्दूधर्म, हिन्दू सस्कृति तथा हिन्दू समाज की अभिवृद्धि कर भारतवर्ष की सर्वांगीण उन्नति करने के लिए मैं राष्ट्रीय स्वय सेवक सघ का घटक बना हूँ। सघ का कार्य मैं प्रामाणिकता, नि स्वार्थ बुद्धि तथा तन, मन, धन पूर्वक करूँगा और इस व्रत का मैं आजन्म पालन करूँगा।

॥ भारत माता की जय ॥

English version of the oath which every candidate is made to take for admission in the Sangh

Before the All Powerful God and my ancestors, I most solemnly take this oath, that I become a member of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh in order to achieve all-round greatness of Bharatvarsh by fostering the growth of my sacred Hindu religion, Hindu society and Hindu culture. I shall per-

form the work of the Sangh honestly, disinterestedly, with my heart and soul, and I shall adhere to this oath all my life

Bharat Mata ki Jai.

(Before 1939 the slogan in the oath was 'Jai Bajrang Bali-Balbhim ki-Jai')

Appendix III
RSS DECLARED UNLAWFUL

1 Text of Government communique dated February 4, 1948

In their resolution of February 2, 1948, the Government of India declared their determination to root out the forces of hate and violence that are at work in our country and imperil the freedom of the Nation and darken her fair name In pursuance of this policy the Government of India have decided to declare unlawful the Rashtriya Swaysmsevak Sangh in the Chief Commissioner s Provinces Similar action is also being taken in the Governor's Provinces

As democratic governments, the Government of India and the provincial governments have always been anxious to allow reasonable scope for genuine political, social and economic activities to all parties and organisations including those whose policies and purposes differ from, or even run counter to their own, subject to the consideration that such activities should not transgress certain commonly recognised limits of propriety or law The professed aims and objects of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh are to promote the physical, intellectual and moral well being of the Hindus and also to foster feelings of brotherhood, love and service amongst them Government themselves are most anxious to improve the general material and intellectual well being of all sections of the people and have got schemes on hand which are designed to carry out these objects, particularly the provision of physical training and education in military matters to the youth of the country Government have, however, noticed with regret that in practice members of the Rashtriya

Swayamsevak Sangh have not adhered to their professed ideals

Undesirable and even dangerous activities have been carried on by members of the Sangh It has been found that in several parts of the country individual members of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh have indulged in acts of violence involving arson, robbery, decoity, and murder and have collected illicit arms and ammunitions They have been found circulating leaflets exhorting people to resort to terrorist methods, to collect fire arms, to create disaffection against the government and suborn the police and the military These activities have been carried on under a cloak of secrecy, and the government have considered from time to time how far these activities rendered it incumbent on them to deal with the Sangh in its corporate capacity The last occasion when the government defined this attitude was when the Premiers and the Home Ministers of provinces met in Delhi in conference towards the end of November

It was then unanimously agreed that the stage when the Sangh should be dealt with as an association had not yet arrived and that individuals should continue to be dealt with sternly as hitherto The objectionable and harmful activities of the Sangh have, however, continued unabated and the cult of violence sponsored and inspired by the activities of the Sangh has claimed many victims The latest and the most precious to fall was Gandhiji himself

In these circumstances it is the bounden duty of the government to take effective measures to curb this re-appearance of violence in a virulent form and as a first step to this end, they have decided to declare the Sangh as an unlawful association Government have no doubt that in taking this measure they have the support of all law abiding citizens, of all those who have the welfare of the country at heart

2. Press Note dated November 14, 1948 issued by the Home Ministry of the Government of India

Soon after his release from prison in Nagpur after the statutory period of six months, Mr. Golwalkar, head of the RSS organisation, made approaches to the government which indicated a possibility that the activities of that organisation might be diverted and confined to channels which would have no harmful effect on the communal situation in the country He also expressed a desire to interview the Home Minister In order to enable him to do so, the Government of India requested the CP government to cancel an order issued by them under which Mr. Golwalkar's movements had been restricted to the city of Nagpur and to facilitate his departure for Delhi for the specific purpose of seeing the Home Minister.

Mr Golwalkar accordingly came to Delhi and had his first interview with the Home Minister soon after his arrival There was an exchange of views and Mr. Golwalkar wanted some time to consult his followers in an attempt to influence them on the right lines Some days later he had his second interview during which he expressed his inability to bind himself to any change until the ban was lifted He felt that the lifting of the ban would strengthen his hands in dealing with his followers Simultaneously, however, the Government of India had got in touch with provincial governments to acquaint themselves with their views and the latest information about the activities of the RSS The information received by the Government of India shows that the activities carried on in various forms and ways by the people associated with the RSS tend to be anti national and often subversive and violent and that persistent attempts are being made by the RSS to revive an atmosphere in the country which was productive of such disastrous consequences in the past For these reasons, the provincial governments have declared themselves opposed to the withdrawal of the ban and the Government of India have concurred with the view of the provincial governments

This position was conveyed to Mr. Golwalkar towards the end of the last month and he was told that since the purpose

for which he had been allowed to come to Delhi had been served, he should now return to Nagpur. Mr Golwalkar was not prepared to accept this position and expressed a desire to see the Home Minister and the Prime Minister on their return to Delhi The Home Minister declined to grant a further interview, but in order to give him a chance to interview the Prime Minister on his return, if the latter so desired, he was allowed to remain in Delhi under certain restrictive orders issued by the District Magistrate of Delhi Mr Golwalkar declined to accept the orders of restrictions, but has made no attempts to contravene the restrictions imposed on him He has written letters both to the Prime Minister and Home Minister explaining inter alia that the RSS agrees entirely in the conception of a secular state for India and that it accepts the National Flag of the country and requesting that the ban imposed on the organisation in February should now be lifted These professions of the RSS leader are, however, quite inconsistent with the practice of his followers and for the reasons already explained above, the Government of India find themselves unable to advise provincial governments to lift the ban The Prime Minister has, therefore, declined the interview which Mr Golwalkar had sought.

Mr Golwalkar is accordingly being informed that he should make immediate arrangements to return to Nagpur The Government of India are also taking appropriate steps to ensure that Mr. Golwalkar complies with these instructions.

Appendix IV

Government communique dated 11th July 1949 announcing the lifting of ban

"In consultation with the Provincial Governments, the Central Government have had under consideration the question of removal of the ban on the R S S The factors governing the problem clearly emerged during the discussion which the leader of the organisation had with Sardar Patel in October last year. In brief, they were that the R S S should function under a written and published Constitution, restrict-

ing its activities to the cultural sphere, abjuring violence and secrecy, professing loyaly to the Constitution of India and the National Flag, and providing for a democratic organisation The public is already familiar with the history of the breakdown of these talks and the course which events took thereafter

"Inspite of this, the Government's attitude to this organisation was never prompted by any spirit of vindictiveness and, when certain non official gentlemen approached them with requests to interview the R S S leader in jail, with a view to persuading him to fulfil the above mentioned conditions, the Government offered them facility to do so In March this year, the R S S leader wrote to the Government forwarding a draft Constitution, the terms of which were examined by Government in consultation with the Provinces The Government of India conveyed to the R S S leader their reactions on the draft and he has now generally accepted the suggestions made by the Government of India and the clarifications made by him indicate that the relevant provisions of the Constitution are intended to be worked in the spirit contemplated by the Government

'The R S S leader has undertaken to make the loyalty to the Union Constitution and respect for the National Flag more explicit in the Constitution of the R S S and to provide clearly that persons believing or resorting to violent and secret methods will have no place in the Sangh The R S S leader has also clarified that the Constitution will be worked on a democratic basis In particular, the office of the Sarsanghachalak would, in effect, be elective in that the successor would be nominated with the consent of the then Karyakari Mandal It would be open to any member of the Sangh to leave it at any time without breaking the pledge and the admission of minors will be subject to the option of the guardian to withdraw his ward under a written request sent to the Sangh authorities

'In the light of the modifications made and clarifications given by the R S S leader, the Government of India have come to the conclusion that the R S S organisation should be given an opportunity to function as a democratic, cultural

organisation owing loyalty to the Indian Constitution and recognising the National Flag eschewing secrecy and abjuring violence Indeed the Government feel that, under a Constitution embodying these principles and worked in the right spirit, no reasonable objection can be taken to such functioning They have accordingly decided to withdraw the ban on the organisation in the Centrally administered areas and to release as soon as possible, all R S S men at the present under detention or undergoing sentences of imprisonment in connection with the R S S activities, and have requested the Provincial Governments to take similar action in their own areas"

Appendix V

CONSTITUTION OF THE RSS

Translated from original in Hindi

Preamble

WHEREAS in the disintegrated conditions of the country it was considered necessary to have an Organisation

(a) to eradicate the fissiparous tendencies arising from diversities of sect, faith, caste and creed and from political, economic, linguistic and provincial differences among Hindus

(b) to make them realise the greatness of their past,

(c) to inculcate in them a spirit of service sacrifice and selfless devotion to the Hindu Samaj, as a whole ,

(d) to build up an organised and well disciplined corporate life , and

(e) to bring about an all round regeneration of the Hindu Samaj,

AND WHEREAS the Organisation known as "THE RASHTRIYA SWAYAMSEWAK SANGH" was started on the Vijaya Dashmi day in the year 1982 Vikram Samvat (1925 A D) by the late Dr Keshav Baliram Hedgewar ,

AND WHEREAS Shri Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar was nominated by the said Dr Hedgewar to succeed him in the year 1997 Vikram Samvat (1940 A D),

AND WHEREAS the Sangh had till now no written constitution ,

AND WHEAEAS in the present changed conditions, it is deemed expedient to reduce to writing the constitution as also the Aims and Objects of the Sangh and its Method of work,

THE RASHTRIYA SWAYAMSEWAK SANGH hereby adopts the following constitution

THE RULES AND REGULATIONS

Name

Article 1

The name of the Organisation is "THE RASHTRIYA SWAYAMSEWAK SANGH"

Head Office

Article 2

The Head Office of the Sangh is at NAGPUR

AIMS AND OBJECTS

Article 3

The Aims and Objects of the Sangh are to weld together the diverse groups within the Hindu Samaj and to revitalise and rejuvenate the same on the basis of its Dharma and Sanskriti, that it may achieve an all sided development of the Bharatvarsha

POLICY

Article 4

(a) The Sangh believes in orderly evolution of the Society and adheres to peaceful and legitimate means for the realisation of its ideals

(b) In consonance with the cultural heritage of the Hindu Samaj the Sangh has abiding faith in the fundamental principle of tolerance towards all faiths

The Sangh, as such, has no politics and is devoted purely to cultural work The individual swayamsewaks, however, may join any political party, except such parties as believe in or resort to violent and secret methods to achieve their ends, persons owing allegiance to such parties or believing in such methods shall have no place in the Sangh

Flag

Article 5

While recognising the duty of every citizen to be loyal to and to respect the State Flag, the Sangh has as its flag, the 'Bhagwa-Dhwaj'—the age old symbol of Hindu Culture

Swayamsevaks

Article 6

1 (a) Any male Hindu of 18 years or more, who subscribes to the Rules and Regulations of the Sangh and takes its pledge, set out in Appendix (a), be registered as a swayamsevak

(b) A swayamsewak shall be deemed to be an active swayamsewak, if he attends a Sangh shakha regularly or performs specific work duly assigned to him

(c) A swayamsevak shall cease to be swayamsewak, if he resigns his membership or is expelled for misconduct or indiscipline or any act prejudicial to the interests of the Sangh

2 Bal swayamsewak Any male Hindu below the age of 18 may be admitted and allowed to participate in the Sangh programmes They will be classified according to their ages and given suitable training in accordance with the Rules framed for the purpose

A list of the bal swayamsewaks will be maintained in the units to which they are admitted

Register of Swayamsewaks

Article 7

(a) Each village, town, city and the provincial centre having a shakha, shall constitute a primary unit of the Sangh

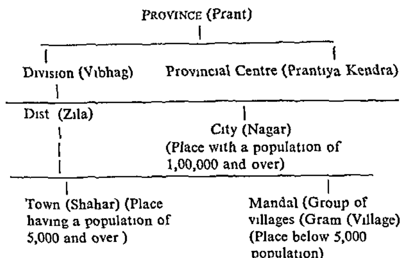
(b) Every shakha shall maintain a register of all its swayamsewaks—active or otherwise

Constituent Units

Article 8

(a) For organisational purposes, the country shall be divided into provinces.

(b) Every province may be further sub divided according to their order of subordination as indicated below



ELECTIONS

Article 9

(a) Elections shall be held after every three years

(b) The date, method and venue of elections shall be determined by the Kendriya Karyakari Mandal

QUALIFICATION FOR VOTERS AND CANDIDATES FOR ELECTIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

Article 10

(A) Voters

Every active swayamsewak of at least one year s standing immediately prior to the date of preparation of electoral lists for the elections, shall be entitled to vote in the elections

(B) Candidates

(1) He (i e , a swayamsewak) who is an officer bearer of a political party shall not be eligible as a candidate for election or as an appointee to any post so long as he is such an office bearer

(2) A candidate for election, for an appointee to any akhil Bharatiya post, shall b-

(a) An active swayamsewak of at least six years' continuous standing , and

(b) Shall work full time without any remuneration

(3) An appointee to a provincial post shall be an active swayamsewak of at least three years' continuous standing

(4) A candidate or appointee for Sangha chalakhship shall be an active swayamsewak of at least one year's standing

ORDER OF AUTHORITIES AND BODIES

Article 11

There shall be the following authorities and bodies constituted as provided in the Articles shown against their names

1	Sar Sangha chalak	Art 12
2	Sar Karyavaha	Art 13
3	Kendriya Karyakari Mandal	Art 14
4	Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha	Art 15
5	Prant, Vibhag, Zila etc Sangh chalaks	. Art 16
6	Pracharaks	Art 17
7	Prantiya, Vibhag, Zila, etc Karyakari Mandals	Art 19
8	Prantiya Pratindihi Sabha	Art 19

SAR SANGHA CHALAK

Article 12

Late Dr Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, the Founder of the Sangh, was the Adya (First) Sar Sangh chalak Shri Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar was nominated Sar Sangh chalak by him in consultation with the then Kendriya Karyakari Mandal He is the Sar Sangh chalak since then The Sar Sangh chalak will nominate his successor, as and when the necessity arises, with the consent of the then Kendriya Karyakari Mandal

The Sar Sangh chalak is the guide and philosopher of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh He may attend, summon or address any assembly of the swayamsewaks, pratinidhi sabhas, and karyakari mandals, severally or jointly

SAR KARYAVAHA

Article 13

(a) The elected members of the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha (Vide Art 15) shall elect the Sar Karyavaha

(b) The Sar Karyavaha shall act in consultation with the Sar Sangh chalak

AKHIL BHARATIYA PRATINIDHI SABHA

Article 15

(a) The elected members of a Prantiya Pratinidhi Sabha shall elect from amongst themselves one eighth of their number as representatives of the province on the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha

(b) Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha shall consist of

(i) Representatives of the delegates

(ii) Sangh chalaks and pracharaks of division and provinces and provincial centres

(iii) Members of the Kendriya Karyakari Mandal

(c) The Sar Karyavaha shall preside over the ABPS

(d) The Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha shall meet at least once a year

(e) The Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha shall review the work and lay down the policy and programme of the Sangh

SANGH CHALAKS

Article 16

(a) Every province, provincial centre, division, district, tehsil, city and town may have a sangh chalak

(b) The prant Sangh chalak shall be elected by delegates elected as per Article 19(a)

(c) The Sangh chalaks for the constituent units in the province shall be annually appointed by the prant Sangh chalak in consultation with the prant pracharak

(d) In case a suitable person is not available for the office of Sangh chalak, the prant Sangh chalak may appoint a karyavaha The karyavaha, so appointed, shall perform the duties of a Sangh chalak

(e) In case of death, departure, prolonged illness or resignation of the prant Sangh chalak the Kendriya Karyakari mandal shall appoint a person to discharge the duties of the prant Sangh chalak

PRACHARAKS

Article 17

(a) (i) Pracharaks shall be full time workers selected from amongst those devoted workers of high integrity whose

mission is to serve the society through the Sangh and who, of their own free will, dedicate themselves to the Cause

(ii) They will receive no remuneration

(b) Appointment of pracharaks

(i) The Akhil Bharatiya Prachar Pramukh will appoint prant pracharaks with the consent of the Sar Karyavaha and in consultation with the Sangh chalaks concerned

(ii) The prant pracharak will appoint pracharaks for different units in the province in consultation with the prant Sangh chalak

(c) The ultimate authority for the appointment, transfer or discontinuance of the service of the pracharaks shall vest in the Sar Karyavaha

Prantiya and Subordinate Karyakari Mandals

Article 18

(a) Sangh chalak of a province, provincial centre, division, district tehsil city or town will form a karyakari mandal consisting of the following office-bearers

(i) The Sangh chalak (he will preside)
(ii) Pracharak [Appointed under Article 17(b)]
(iii) Karyavaha
(iv) Bauddhik Shikshan Pramukh
(v) Sharirik Shikshan Pramukh
(vi) Nidhi Pramukh

(b) Each karyakari mandal shall also have in addition not less than three members chosen from amongst the karyakari mandals of the subordinate units, if any

(c) Karyakari mandals will be the highest executive authorities in their respective units responsible to the imme diately superior karyakari mandal for implementing the policy and carrying out the programme laid down by the ABP Sabha They shall supervise the Sangh work in their respective units and control the finances

(d) Karyakari mandals will have the power to take disciplinary action against any individual swayamsevak for breach of discipline or behaviour prejudicial to the interests and honour of the Sangh Such an action is subject to confirmation by the Karyakari Mandal of the superior unit

(e) The PKM with sanction of the KKM may change the provincial centre.

(f) The Prantiya Karyakari Mandal may, if necessary reconstitute the various units in the province.

(g) The Prantiya Karyakari Mandal may frame rules in consonance with the Constitution and the rules framed by the Kendriya Karyakari Mandal for the proper functioning of the Sangh in the province

(h) For mandals and places with a population of less than 5,000 a karyavaha will be appointed by the Sangh chalak of the superior unit He will be responsible for the Sangh work in his unit

PRANTIYA PRATINIDHI SABHA

Article 19

(a) Districts, cities and the provincial centre will send for every fifty swayamsewaks entitled to vote, one such swayamsewak as delegate to the Prantiya Pratinidhi Sabha

(b) The Prantiya Pratinidhi Sabha shall consist of

(i) The elected delegates
(ii) Sangh Chalaks and pracharaks of divisions, districts, cities and of the provincial centre
(iii) Members of the Prantiya Karyakari Mandal

(c) The Prant Sagh Chalak will preside over the Prantiya Pratinidhi Sabha

(d) The Prantiya Pratinidhi Sabha shall meet at least once a year

(e) The Prantiya Pratinidhi Sabha shall review the work in the province and make such recommendations to the PKM as it may deem fit.

PROGRAMMES

Article 20

The existing branches of the Sangh will continue subject to the provisions of the Constitution

New branches may be opened

Physical training will be given by means of exercises and games organised at a convenient hour every day.

Occasional talks and lectures will be arranged for imparting intellectual training and inculcating love for ideals of Hindu dharma and culture.

Periodical classes for swayamsevaks to be trained as instructors and workers will be arranged

Festivals of cultural importance will be celebrated and members of the public may be invited on such occasions

Agencies and institutions may be established to disseminate knowledge of the ideals and activities of the Sangh and to educate the people generally

In general the Sangh may do all such things and carry on any other work capable of being undertaken in connection with and calculated, directly or indirectly, to promote and achieve any of the objects mentioned in Art 3

MEETINGS, CONFERENCES, RALLIES AND TRAINING CLASSES

Article 21

(a) All karyakari mandals will meet as often as necessary but at least once in the period shown below against each

KKM	—	Four months
PKM	—	Four months
VKM	—	Three months
ZKM	—	Three months
Teh KM	—	Two months
Other KMs	—	One month

(b) The workers or swayamsewaks of any unit or of two or more co ordinate units may have combined programmes and meet together in conferences, rallies or training classes, with the previous permission of the proper authorities of the superior unit

(c) The KKM may arrange Akhil Bharatiya Conference and rallies of workers and swayamsewaks

(d) The KKM shall organise training classes called Adhikari Shikshan Varga at different places in the country to impart training in the Sangh work Swayamsewaks thus trained in the prescribed three years course will be qualified instructors

FUNDS

Article 22

(a) All offerings gifts donations etc received for Sangh

(b) On the 'Vyas Poornima' function of every year or any other sacred day fixed for the purpose every branch will celebrate the 'Dakshina Day and will receive voluntary offerings

(c) The funds received by the branch will be entrusted by the Sangh chalak to the nidhi pramukh of the branch concerned, who will be responsible for maintaining proper accounts, which shall be annually audited

(d) The funds received by a village branch will remain with the karyavaha of that branch The Tehsil Nidhi Pramukh will supervise the management of funds of all such branches within the tehsil

(e) The KKM and PKM shall issue such directions for the disbursement of the funds collected by its subordinate units as it may from time to time think necessary for the general advancement of the Sangh work

QUORUM

Article 23

One half of the total strength shall form the quorum for the meetings of the various karyakari mandals and one fifth for the Prantiya and Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabhas

UNDEVELOPED UNITS

Article 24

(a) In case of provinces in which the work has not yet developed to an appreciable level, elections shall not be held, and the Prant Pracharak appointed shall be in sole charge of the work

(b) The province shall be deemed to be developed when

The number of active swayamsewaks reaches one thousand in that province

Provided the KKM is satisfied with the general progress of the work in that province

The KKM, however, may provide to such provinces due representation on the Akhil Bharatiya Sabha in a manner it deems fit

INTERPRETATION AND AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION

Article 25

(a) The interpretation of the Constitution and its clauses by the Kendriya Karyakari Mandal shall be final

(b) An Amendment to the Constitution can be proposed to the KKM by any PKM or by any other karyakari mandal with the recommendation of the respective PKM of any twenty five members of the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha The KKM will put the proposal of an amendment before the PKMs and the amendment will be deemed carried if two thirds of the provinces agree by a simple majority

(c) The decisions of the PKMs over such amendments may be brought for reconsideration before the ABP Sabha on a requisition by any twenty five members of that Sabha The decision of the ABP Sabha in this behalf, taken by two-thirds majority shall be final

Appendix B

Abbreviations

Sangh	Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh
ABPS	Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha
KKM	Kendriya Karyakari Mandal
PKM	Prantiya Karyakari Mandal
VKM	Vibhag Karyakari Mandal
ZKM	Zila Karyakari Mandal
TKM	Tehsil Karyakari Mandal
KM	Karyakari Mandal

Appendix VI

DEORAS LETTERS

The following letters written by RSS Sar Sangh chalak Bala saheb Deoras to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Vinobaji respectively are originally in Hindi and their English translation (as given in Five headed Monster *by Brahm Dutt) is being reproduced below*

Yerwada Central Jail
Pune — 6
Dated 22 8 1975

Smt Indira Gandhi
Prime Minister,
Bharat, New Delhi
The translation of this letters is very poor
Respectful Namaskar,

From the jail I listened with rapt attention to your broad

st message relayed from AIR and addressed to the Nation August 15, 1975 Your speech was suitable for the casion and well balanced, so I took the pen to write this tter

I had been placed under house arrest at Nagpur on 30-5-75 ter some time I was brought to Pune from Nagpur and as kept in jail

On July 4, 1975 the Central Government banned the RSS ter promulgating a special ordinance Whatever information d knowledge one could gather from the newspapers it pears that the activities of the organisation and its organi-rs have been a hurdle to internal safety, universal peace and nooth running of the government After studying all these uses, the RSS has been banned Approximately 23,000 orkers and organisers have been arrested in different parts of e country, a fact which has been confirmed and corroborated the newspapers

In the meantime I could read the speeches of some of your aders and officials and their interviews published therein I ke the privilege to correspond with you on the basis of these wspapers' briefs

What could possibly be the right cause of banning the ngh is difficult to assess and to attribute through the ordi-ance The RSS has never done anything as might hamper the nooth running of the government, the internal security and ace *of the country The aim of the Sangh is to unite the all* dia Hindu community, to organise and emulate the same e organisation tries to discipline our society With that idea view, the Sangh follows the path Along with the same, propriate steps are taken to execute the programme Hence ere is no such factor within the Sangh fold as would cause ernal disturbances and disruption to security and peace

Some people occasionally level charges against the RSS It not possible to refute all such allegations in this letter Still *is necessary to clarify that the organisation has never* vocated the cause of violence, neither believes, in such aching During 50 years, not a single example, which can ove that RSS volunteers ever were violent and oppressive, s been witnessed Many acts of violence and disturbances ve been experienced but neither the courts nor the commis-

sions appointed by the government ever reported that the RSS volunteers were responsible for the same Hence it is obvious that the Sangh never committed any such incriminating act The Sangh does not stand for introduction or initiation of the same

Still some people, being prejudiced from the beginning, bring false allegations against the Sangh For example people in haste tried to implicate the Sangh in the murder of Late L N Misra Now, after a thorough probe, it has come to light that there is no connection of this incident with this organisation There are even some people who falsely allege that the Sangh had a hand in Gandhiji's murder too It has already been proved that the Sangh was not in the least involved in this incident and hence there is nothing more to write in this letter about that All the officials of the Sangh are the recognised citizens of the society There are some persons who allege that RSS is a communal organisation But their charges are baseless Though the field of the Sangh is limited only to the Hindu community, yet nothing is taught here against any non Hindu society It is a white lie to say that hymns of hatred are taught or sung in the Sangh No unpalatable word is uttered in the Sangh against the Islam, against Mohammad, the Prophet, the Koran and the Christian religion, against Jesus Christ and Bible Not only this, but "*Sarva Dharma Sambhav Mane Ekamsad Vipra Bahuda Vadanti*' which is the main characteristic of the Hindu religion, the Sangh attaches greatest importance to that There exists a cordial relation between many RSS workers and people of different faiths — the Muslims, the Christians, the Parsees and others The social problems of the Hindus and the non Hindu communities differ from each other Hence RSS has confined its activities to the Hindu community only The Sangh's effort is to do away with casteism, with linguistic differences, with the feeling of separatism between the high ups and the low downs due to various causes and to unite the entire Hindu community as one You shall also feel its dire necessity and agree to this sort of work It is well apparent from this that RSS is not a communal or national organisation as thought of This is the notion of the Sangh that all should enjoy the liberty of their own ritualism

The RSS is trying to selflessly make every person of the Hindu community or society a good citizen, a patriot and a person of character It is really a misfortune if the organisation is banned by the order of our of government

It is no magic to improve immediately the condition of our society along with the conditions of the tribals, the down trodden and the poor people This path is long thorny and full of selfless actions Cooperation of many is needed for this task "The real power of the community lies in one's own field, hence one should devote oneself with honesty to this task as you said in your speech delivered on August, 15, 1975 inviting the entire country to this work, it was most befitting the occasion and the time The work of RSS has extended to every nook and corner of the whole of India People from every class and stratum of our society are there Many selfless workers are in the Sangh The entire work of the Sangh is based on selfless thought It is necessary to properly utilise such power of the Sangh for the upliftment of our country

It is prayed that you shall kindly reconsider this, leaving aside your prejudices and bias Liberty of organisation is a fundamental right in all democratic countries. This is my humble prayer to you that you shall kindly keep the above in view and shall lift the ban on RSS If you think it proper, my meeting with you will be a source of pleasure to me

Yours faithfully,

MADHUKAR DATTATREYA DEORAS

Respected Smt Indira Gandhiji,
Prime Minister
Government of India
New Delhi

Yerwada Central Jail
Pune 6
Dated 10-11-1975

Respectful Namaskar,

Let me congratulate you as five judges of the Supreme Court have declared the validity of your election

I wrote a letter to you from Ekhra jail on 22 8-75 That letter ought to have reached you directly but contrary to that the letter went to the Maharashtra government and from there it was despatched to you I have been intimated so You might have received the same I am waiting for the reply from

your end

I am not going to repeat now in this letter of mine the contents of my letter dated 22-8-75 But in the meantime I could go through the Marathi edition of two government publications in the form of booklets in which your speech delivered in the Parliament on July 22, 1975, and your narration of causes in support of the emergency were published

Many allegations have been introduced in your speech and in the booklets, basing the facts on the interpretations They are definitely incorrect

Some sentences from the books of the late respected Golwalkarji's two books *Our Nationhood Defined* and *Bunch of Thoughts* have been quoted in the aforesaid booklet Late Golwalkarji was a great thinker like Mahatma Gandhi and Pt Jawaharlal Nehru It was also natural for him to spead and to write on various subjects other than the clear cut policies of the Sangh Those thoughts of his cannot be understood without any context Mahatma Gandhi once said, "A Muslim is a bully and a Hindu is a coward" Pt Nehru pleaded the cause of the Muslims only to avail the support of Muslim berthren To speak thus or criticise thus tantamounts to the criticism in respect of a particular profession Guruji never criticised either the Muslim religion or Mohammad, the Prophet, or the Koran, neither Christianity or Jesus Christ or the Bible

You have mentioned in your speech about the reports of one or two commissions Attempt has been made to implicate the Sangh with disturbances, after taking one or two words from those reports Several disturbances, or riots have occurred till now Commissions were appointed in connection with the same But those commissions declared that the Sangh had no hand in such riots There is no such example wherein any worker or the official ot the Sangh had been sentenced in any legal cases after the riots

You have mentioned about a letter of Sardar Patel in connection with the murder of Mahatma Gandhi Sri Patel was the Home Minister and it was natural for him to write such a letter in support of the government policy. But a published booklet containing his opinions includes also a

The RSS is trying to selflessly make every person of the Hindu community or society a good citizen, a patriot and a person of character It is really a misfortune if the organisation is banned by the order of our of government

It is no magic to improve immediately the condition of our society along with the conditions of the tribals, the down trodden and the poor people This path is long, thorny and full of selfless actions Cooperation of many is needed for this task "The real power of the community lies in one's own field, hence one should devote oneself with honesty to this task" as you said in your speech delivered on August, 15, 1975 inviting the entire country to this work, it was most befitting the occasion and the time The work of RSS has extended to every nook and corner of the whole of India People from every class and stratum of our society are there Many selfless workers are in the Sangh The entire work of the Sangh is based on selfless thought It is necessary to properly utilise such power of the Sangh for the upliftment of our country

It is prayed that you shall kindly reconsider this, leaving aside your prejudices and bias Liberty of organisation is a fundamental right in all democratic countries. This is my humble prayer to you that you shall kindly keep the above in view and shall lift the ban on RSS If you think it proper, my meeting with you will be a source of pleasure to me

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letter written to the Prime Minister in which he has expressed his conviction about the Sangh having no connection in the least with the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi You might have no knowledge about this letter

You have called the Sangh 'a fascist organisation' You have also said that the meaning of fascism is 'propaganda of lies'' Whatever charges you have levelled against the Sangh for spreading rumour etc, they are all baseless Examples abound all over the world regarding rumour mongering which spread in the society even after the censorship is clamped over newspapers Hence it is improper to allege against the Sangh for spreading rumours

There is always a programme of action along with the thoughts on fascism From these two standpoints the Sangh bears no relationship with fascism The fascists of Italy and the nazis of Germany called themselves 'National Socialists' The thinking process of the Sangh is mainly based on Hindu spiritualism From the practical standpoint they are fascists who do not fall in line with those who disagree with them and are oppressive, those who question the power to rule and those who oppress Sangh keeps itself aloof from the power politics People are inspired by the aims and objects of the Sangh and they feel attracted to it voluntarily Under these ciscumstances to term the Sangh as a fascist organisation is utterly improper

The Sangh has been referred to in connection with the movement of Jaya Prakash Narayan The name of the Sangh has been linked with the Bihar and the Gujarat movements again and agein and without any cause In reference to the clarification of the fact that the Sangh has no connection with these movements I have mentioned mainly two points The first, these movements took place as a result of growing dissatisfaction among the public in general Hence you and we all are responsible for the same Second, it is improper and discourteous to call Jaya Prakash Narayan as a CIA agent, a party to capitalists or a traitor He is also a patriot Such ideas have been expressed in many of your speeches

Every time in my lectures I have protested against the lawlessness in our country The Sangh and lawlessness are

two contradictory words

"Arajakeshu Rashtreshu Dharmo Na Vyavatishthate Parasparam Cha Khadanti, Sasmat, Dhik Arajakam"

Quoting this from Mahabharta, I myself have opposed and forbidden such disloyalty

This is not the place to reply to all the charges against the Sangh It is not even possible through letters It can possibly be clarified during our meetings But still it should be made explicit that legislation or law made by you is far from the reality It is just the same to beat the ground in pretence of a snake Your legislation is based on wrong conception This has so happened as a result of your being conversant with wrong and imaginative information given to you by some persons interested in politics

This is my belief that you might have been informed by your administrative machinery that the officials and the RSS volunteers are honourable citizens They initiate at their own places in the fields of public work, of education, of culture etc The work of the Sangh has all along been spotless and innocent Such informations too, you might have received

Hence this is my request to you that you kindly assume the correct impression about the Sangh, after taking into consideration its correct position and after giving up your bias against it Set free thousands of RSS workers and remove the restrictions on the Sangh If done so, power of selfless work on the part of lakhs of RSS volunteers will be utilised for national upliftment (government as well as non government) and as we all wish, our country will be prosperous

Awaiting the reply of my letter ,

Yours faithfully,
MADHUKAR DATTATREYA DEORAS

* * * * * *

At the feet of Respected Acharya Vinobaji,

A meeting of the acharyas of our country under your guidance has been scheduled to be held on the 16th, 17th and 18th January and it has been informed that discussions regarding the deteriorated condition of country are going to be held

I am happy to learn this , I have started believing that, during these discussions, some ways are to be found out of the emergent situation On this occasion, what smaller role is to be played by me is the content of this brief letter

After the death of the most revered Guruji, the responsibility of the Sangh's activities was shouldered by me I had also come to Pavnar for your "darshan" You gave me your "darshan" and blessed me I remember this daily I am trying my level best to discharge my responsibilities on the strength of your sacred blessings

Both you and Guruji were well acquainted At times when both of you met, matters relating to the state, the time and the activities of the Sangh were discussed When I came to meet you, such discussions were held Not only this, you inspired and blessed me for the working of the Sangh by saying, "Please take me to be an uncivilised member of the Sangh "

As before an unforeseen restriction was clamped down on the Sangh on account of my association with the same and after being arrested, I was kept in the Ekhra jail Thus all over the country in different places thousands of workers and officials were thrust into jail The sequence of such arrests is still continuing

From my point of view such ban on the Sangh and the arrests of so many volunteers is based on a wrong conception Particularly it appears that many people around Smt Indira Gandhi were made to harbour a wrong idea about the Sangh No opportunity was availed regarding the removal of this wrong impression about the Sangh and the presentation of its real picture as a result of which this calamity befell on the workers of the organisation

From this Jail, I attempted twice to let Shrimati Indira Gandhi know about what my role was but it did not appear if that had received her attention as yet Not only this, I had not been even informed about the receipt of my letters

Many charges are levelled against the Sangh and the Sangh is put to harsh one sided criticism All these charges against the Sangh are false and baseless The contents of this letter are not meant for the reply to these charges You are well

acquainted with the goal of the Sangh, its work and the process of the work

It is true that the Sangh wants to organise the Hindu community but that does not make it communal or national It is beyond one s understanding how the outlook of Hinduism can be narrow and communal The matter would have been different if at the time of organising the Hindus we would have done anything wrong against the non Hindus Not a single word of aspersion is uttered against the followers of other religions Neither it is taught to hate others than those of Hindus In as much as the lectures of Respected Guruji have referred respectfully to the Koran, the Prophet Mohammad the Islamic religion, to Jesus Christ, the Bible and Christianity

For these last 30 years, the work of the Sangh is being done openly on the open fields During this period some riots broke out between the Hindus and the Muslims but even in such a fray the Sangh never took part Commissions were appointed after such communal disturbances Reports of the same had also been received The Sangh never was found responsible and no one was ever sued in the Court

Some persons think, without rhyme or reason, that the Sangh encourages violence But this a very wrong notion The Sangh does not have faith in the least on the creed of violence The Sangh has neither been violent nor encouraged acts of violence

The main function of the Sangh is to rectify man The RSS volunteers are asked to observe control and discipline, hence it can have not place for violence In the lectures of Respected Guruji and mine too disloyalty and violence have been criticised vehemently

"Arajkeshu Rashtreshu Dharmo Na Vyavatishthate Parasparam Cha Khadanti, Tasmat, Dhik Arajakam

Quoting the above as a proof, stress has been given on non violence and peaceful transition

The Sangh is alleged of becoming a fascist organisation How can that organisation become a fascist one when it has all along been far from politics of grabbing power and where

people being inspired by the ideal come can and do come, voluntarily?

Those who create awe amongst people after achieving power and status and utilising the same power oppress and repress others are called fascists The Sangh can never be termed so The view of the Sangh is based on ethical principles and spiritual heredity As it is, it is totally wrong, unjust and false to call the Sangh as a fascist organisation This is our mode of thinking and our behaviour that the voluntary organisations should keep themselves aloof after rectifying the people This is all known to you Hence, now that you and the educated people of our country are about to discuss the present critical and dangerous situation of our country, it is natural, discussions will now be going on regarding RSS You are in the know of everything about the Sangh So this is my prayer that you should come at the forefront and find out such worthy ways by following which the Sangh can work as before so that its power can be utilised in constructive work

Praying for your blessings,

Yours faithfully
MADHUKAR DATTATREYA DEORAS

Acharya Vinoba Bhave
Pavnar Ashram
Wardha
Distt Wardha

** ** **

St George s Hospital
Prison Ward No 14
Bombay

At the feet of Respected Acharya Vinobaji'

I wrote a letter to you from Ekhra Jail on 12 1-76 You might have received that at the time when the conference of the acharyas was going to begin I hope so I wrote in that letter what the Sangh had to say in reply to the recent charges levelled against it, and I prayed to you that you should help for the removal of the ban on the Sangh

All of our friends became hopeful about the future, bright prospect as a result of your guidance at the conference of the

acharyas, of deliberations and of unanimous verdict which we could read in the newspapers

As far as I remember I think you and Guruji met at Keljhar (Nagpur-Wardha Road) When you had asked Guruji whether his angle of vision in respect of other religions was that of tolerance, Guruji had told you that we were not only tolerant to other religions, more so, we respect even those religions

When you were on padayatra for Bhudan in UP, Bihar and other states, the RSS volunteers met you every where and participated in every programme of yours What type of behaviour and thoughts the swayamsewaks of Sangh have, you are well acquainted with that

It has been published in the newspapers that the Hon'ble Prime Minister is going to meet you at the Pavnar Ashram on the 24th Discussion relating to the present day situation of our country will be held This is my prayer to you that you kindly try to remove the wrong notion of the Prime Minister about the Sangh, and as a result of which the RSS volunteers will be set free, the ban on the Sangh will be lifted and such a condition will prevail as to enable the volunteers of the Sangh to participate in the planned programme of action relating to country s progress and prosperity under the leadership of the Prime Minister

Praying for your blessings,

Yours faithfully,
MADHUKAR DATTATREYA DEORAS
Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh

N B

You might not have received my letter dated 12/1, hence I am sending you the copy of the same

M D DEORAS

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